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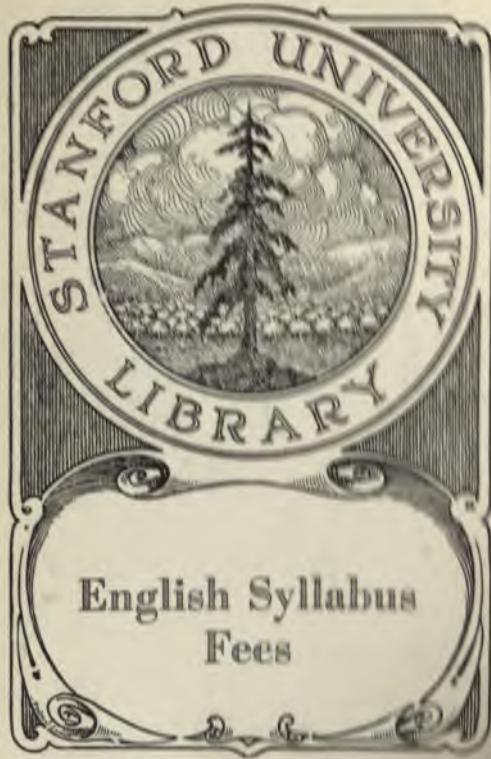
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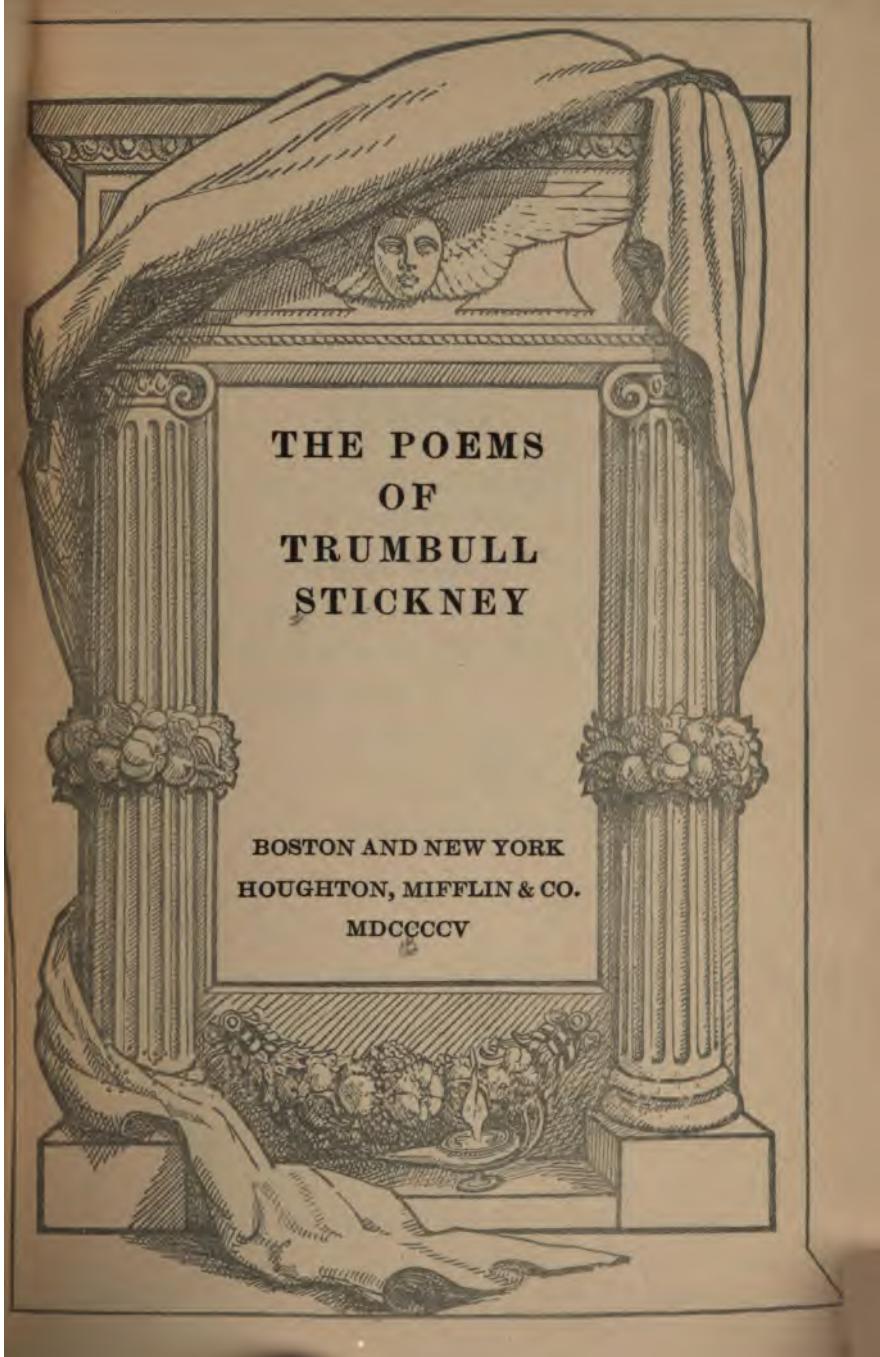




THE  
POEMS  
OF  
**TRUMBULL STICKNEY**

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THE POEMS  
OF  
TRUMBULL  
STICKNEY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.

MDCCCCV

568358

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*Published November 1905*

YANKEE INVENTOR

## PREFATORY NOTE

STICKNEY *said to us, just before he died, "Here are my manuscripts, you will do as you please with them."* We were, he explained, with no further word of advice or guidance, to use only our own judgment: free to publish or suppress, in whole or in part, exactly as seemed best to us. Therefore it happens that, in all particulars of selection and editing, we are responsible for this present volume, which, in our intention, offers to the public, in definitive form, all of STICKNEY'S work that is for any reason valuable.

GEORGE CABOT LODGE

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY

JOHN ELLERTON LODGE



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## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**



JOSEPH TRUMBULL STICKNEY was born on the twentieth day of June, 1874, at Geneva, Switzerland. His parents were both of long-established New England family. He was the third of four children, two older sisters and a younger brother. For the first five years of STICKNEY's life the family passed their winters in Florence, their autumns on the Italian lakes, and their summers in Switzerland; and even though in 1879 they returned to New York, bought a house there, and there, for a matter of fifteen years or more, were pretty regularly established, nevertheless during this time many of their summers and winters were spent in Europe. In the autumn of 1891, at the age of seventeen, STICKNEY entered Harvard University. He was graduated with high classical honours in the early summer of 1895 and immediately departed to join his family in Europe, where, as it turned out, he was to remain continuously until the autumn of 1903.

Throughout these eight years STICKNEY passed his winters, without exception, and most of his summers, save for occasional vacations to the sea, to the country, to Italy, steadily in Paris, there pursuing the immediate official object of his life, the Doctorat ès Lettres, — the highest degree in the gift of the great French University. In the autumn of 1902, his volume of

poems, "Dramatic Verses," was published; and, in the winter of 1903, the University of Paris gave him its great degree — never before conferred on an American — in exchange for his two theses, printed the same year, "Les Sentences dans la Poésie Grecque d'Homère à Euripide," and "De Hermolai Barbari vita atque ingenio dissertationem." In April, 1903, he left Paris to spend three months in Greece. On his return from Greece, he broke up his establishment in Paris, and, in the autumn of 1903, came to America, where a place as instructor of Greek at Harvard already awaited him.

He performed the duties of this position uninterrupted until his death, caused by tumour on the brain. He died in Boston on October 11, 1904, hardly more than thirty years of age.

## **POEMS**

## NOTE

IN order to provide a clear and comprehensive view of STICKNEY's poetic work, taken in its connection with his life, this volume has been divided into several sections. STICKNEY's poems, indeed, seem to fall so naturally together into certain well-defined groups, that the present arrangement appears almost to have imposed itself upon the editors.

**I**

**DRAMATIC VERSES**

[This first section comprises, in its entirety, the volume of poems entitled "Dramatic Verses" (Charles E. Goodspeed, Boston, October, 1902), which was published under STICKNEY's supervision during his lifetime. It is here reprinted in exactly the order of its first publication, as it has been thought best to preserve, in this section, the grouping and arrangement which were STICKNEY's own.

It is not possible accurately to date all the poems in this section. None, however, were written earlier than 1894, in which year STICKNEY was nineteen and twenty years of age. Throughout the section a date has been ascribed, when possible, to each poem.]

*My dear Bay:*

*This is for Bessie and you, if you will find room for it  
among better things.*

*Paris, 1902.*



## KALYPSO

THEN sang Kalypso yet another song.  
And it was waxen late. Beyond her isle,  
Beyond the sea and world hung drearily  
A full moon. Quiet was, except the wind  
Lifting the water's murmur as a girl  
May lift the fold of some sad Eastern silk.  
One cloud, a presage, loitered. All the air  
Was marvellous and sorrowful, as of  
Jasmine sea-touched and roses pale with spray,  
Of fading oleander, clematis  
Grown weary on the garden wall. Anon  
The cold salt wind did rise and scatter all  
Odours: a little chill, then quietude.  
So here did mix the land's breath and the sea's.

And still she paused. Her solemn lips, possessed  
By that shy thought that comes before a song,  
Were silent. And he raised his languid arm.  
Clasping it all she turnèd on him then  
The earnest heaven of her desirous eyes;  
Drew him about her feet, against her knees,  
Closer; and rested in his hair one hand.  
The other alone, moving so musical  
That her low notes were not more song than it,  
Described the region of the sinking moon,  
While soft and even a most unhappy strain,

The modulation of an endless grief,  
Flowed from her lips. And tiredly she sang:

“She says: ‘Follow my steps and take my hand  
To where the shoreward sea falls colourless  
And light is growing less, grows ever less  
Yet quencheth never; where the seas expand  
And shrink, where nothing altereth. I stand  
Upon that melancholy marge of sand.

“‘The Earth was made; yet then was I alone,  
Walking this skyey meadow’s nodding gold.  
I’ve seen her freshest garden turnèd old  
And men grow mortal in her beds of stone.  
But I am still alone, and near the sun  
Sometimes I think my heart is waxen cold  
For having been so very long alone.’”

Her voice was richer with the widening song.  
Light came and went, colour reposed and fled  
About her face. There in the swarty night  
She shone like opal, flickering weird flame  
And crossed with splendour. On his neck her hand  
Quivered; he felt her blood throb; languidly  
Thro’ closing eyelids of the soul he saw  
The world dissolve in rosiness. She sang:

“‘Come! so long have I looked on thee, so long  
That my gold lids are heavy with desire;

My arms for waiting here in heaven tire;  
My throat is tuneless with unceasèd song.  
Where nothing is and day and night prolong  
Each other in the sober twilight fire,  
Give me thy soul for having looked so long.

“I go below. Follow thou in my trace  
And taste my solitude. There all the air  
Becomes a lover feeling love so rare.  
The chilly wave walks nearer yet to share  
The rhythm and ecstasy of our embrace,  
And evening jealous of our flushèd face  
Goes out in sad retire and pale despair.

“And while upon that solitary sand  
The ripples burn away their fringe of light  
And after me drawn down the heavenly night  
Unnumbered stars fall throbbing to the land,  
Let all the glamour of my courses waned  
Possess thy soul in lingering delight,—  
Let me in darkness feel thy failing hand.”

Over his head she stooped. Her odorous hair  
Fell thickly o'er his face. She kissèd him  
With all the sleepy honeys of her soul.  
Her arms did slip along his neck, his breast;  
She kissed him lazily upon the lids  
And languorously on the brow, she kissed him  
Trembling and fiery on the opened mouth.

And slowly —

Wind rose. Rustles crept to 's ear.  
Thro' meshes of her hair he saw gray-blown  
The thick tumultuous cloud blotted and streaked  
With witchery of dead moon. The midnight whirred.  
Sparsely the windy stars and feebly hung.  
A little withered leaf blew by; it scratched  
Him with its frittered edge. For it was autumn.  
Autumn it was. Then did he know. No more  
That year would he return, that year no more;  
Rather, locked by the vastly circular  
Walls o' the sea, the quashing roof of heaven,  
Still suffocated in the changeless air,  
Still vexed by incessant memory and recall,  
Would stand in pain desirous of that dear  
Fireside and her more dear and beautiful —  
O curse to exile! Horrid ire shook him.  
He started from her embrace, muttered, struggled, —  
Then sudden came into dominion  
Of his great self. He stood and said to her,  
"Thou art more masterful than death. The life  
That spurred me thro' the waters of the world  
Was spent indeed, — and claimed again, O love,  
Upon thy soul's warm shore." And amorously, she  
thought,  
He neared her, lifted her. They drew toward  
Her dwelling. To herself she seemèd queen  
Over his love, and on the forward heaven  
Of her retreating hope she lit the stars

Of happy hours, of happy days, — the crown  
Of long desire; and drank of his embrace  
A dear oblivion of sad doubt: the while  
He plotted to beguile this woman here,  
Gaoler of Fate, to drug her love asleep,  
That ere his death tho' waxen old he'd see  
Were 't but the smoke of tree-clad Ithaca.

[1896]

## O N C E

THAT day her eyes were deep as night.  
 She had the motion of the rose,  
 The bird that veers across the light,  
 The waterfall that leaps and throws  
 Its irised spindrift to the sun.  
 She seemed a wind of music passing on.

Alone I saw her that one day  
 Stand in the window of my life.  
 Her sudden hand melted away  
 Under my lips, and without strife  
 I held her in my arms awhile  
 And drew into my lips her living smile, —

Now many a day ago and year!  
 Since when I dream and lie awake  
 In summer nights to feel her near,  
 And from the heavy darkness break  
 Glitters, till all my spirit swims  
 And her hand hovers on my shaking limbs.

If once again before I die  
 I drank the laughter of her mouth  
 And quenched my fever utterly,  
 I say, and should it cost my youth,  
 'T were well! for I no more should wait  
 Hammering midnight on the doors of fate.

## IN THE PAST

THERE lies a somnolent lake  
Under a noiseless sky,  
Where never the mornings break  
Nor the evenings die.

Mad flakes of colour  
Whirl on its even face  
Iridescent and streaked with pallour;  
And, warding the silent place,

The rocks rise sheer and gray  
From the sedgeless brink to the sky  
Dull-lit with the light of pale half-day  
Thro' a void space and dry.

And the hours lag dead in the air  
With a sense of coming eternity  
To the heart of the lonely boatman there:  
That boatman am I,

I, in my lonely boat,  
A waif on the somnolent lake,  
Watching the colours creep and float  
With the sinuous track of a snake.

Now I lean o'er the side  
And lazy shades in the water see,  
Lapped in the sweep of a sluggish tide  
Crawled in from the living sea;

And next I fix mine eyes,  
So long that the heart declines,  
On the changeless face of the open skies  
Where no star shines;

And now to the rocks I turn,  
To the rocks, around  
That lie like walls of a circling urn  
Wherein lie bound

The waters that feel my powerless strength  
And meet my homeless oar  
Labouring over their ashen length  
Never to find a shore.

But the gleam still skims  
At times on the somnolent lake,  
And a light there is that swims  
With the whirl of a snake;

And tho' dead be the hours i' the air,  
And dayless the sky,  
The heart is alive of the boatman there:  
That boatman am I.

## ONEIROPOLOS

COME, Sakhi. Here within this edge of shade  
 We'll stand against the house-wall shadow-cooled.  
 There's no one left at noon in the Agora  
 To quib their fortune of my dozen birds.  
 The town — the world, these poor Athenians think —  
 Goes home and half asleep. Their prattling stops.  
 And burned by sunlight thro' the stifling hours,  
 Temple and house, statue and wall and road  
 Glow as hot copper.

But here shadow dwells;  
 And here by the sun-stricken afternoon  
 I stand leaning my head, and close my eyes.  
 A red light swims my brain awhile, then goes;  
 And unto memory I surrender me  
 Of all my master Brihadashua said,  
 My blessed master pure and charitable  
 Who dwelt in Kashi by the holy stream.  
 Happy indeed was I, happy to count  
 A wizard in my kindred such as he,  
 Whose lips were wholly dedicate to truth,  
 Whose hand dispensed sérene and wonderful  
 Peace to the spirit as a tree his shade.  
 To him, as one who rushes head aflame,  
 Kindled and dry with fever, toward shore,  
 I went; and most divinely pitiful  
 He taught me wisdom. To his voice I turned  
 As turns a lotus to the rosy dawn,

Filling with light, gathering treasure thence  
 To keep within its heart all the day long.  
 Sometime he spake, and all were blest; sometime  
 Silent we sat within the pale and help  
 Of all his thought. Continually did fall  
 The pleasant dew of patience from his eye,  
 Which looking ever beyond world and star  
 Was large as upper heaven. They were the days  
 When I had laid the world to rest within me  
 And, tho' with childish lips, did after him  
 Say as in dream the holy syllables.  
 He died, — rather, I heard him never more.  
 His final earthly errand, whilst his mind,  
 Quitting our vain and pitiable scene,  
 Dissolved, he gave me in trust. I quit the shore  
 Of holy Ganga's healing water-wave,  
 Long travelled, breathed of many airs, reviewed  
 Forests of sandal, where the Spring wind blew,  
 And tender-petalled lily-beds, whereo'er  
 The gray crane spanned his gracious, level flight.  
 Westward I followed, following every day  
 In quest of that he bade me. At the last  
 I beheld Sindhus, and my errand 's done.

Hear, Sakhi, yet awhile my destiny.  
 The burning season shone. I stayed — too late.  
 The people's rumour told of a great host,  
 Yavanas named, from the utter unknown lands,  
 Generalled by a god and more innumerable

Than drops in rainy season; giants all,  
That tramped about the edges of the world  
And rose like a live night of crying birds  
Across and thro' high heaven, then fell to earth —  
What needs the many words? The Greeks were on.  
One midday hour the world did leap apart,  
And thence a thirsty multitude in riot,  
With women, gold, flocks, armour, camels, coins;  
Maddened with hunger for another world;  
Each vagabond upon his empty heart  
An empire's jewel scattering the light.  
They sacked the land, then weary sat them down,  
And with a million mouths and voices cried  
They'd walk the wide and feeble earth no more.  
So spake the children and the world obeyed.  
Oceanward, between patient Sindhus' shores,  
The locusts moved, leaving a piteous land,  
With goods and gold and men, whereof was I.  
Over a milky ocean torn with flame  
And faced with greenish current, 'long a shore  
Crusted with yellow sand, beneath a sky  
Of endless sun, they lived and sailed and died.  
Then for a little year the millions tramped  
Thro' deserts flat as sea and gray as cloud,  
Till they saw finally a shore. And ships  
Bore them 'twixt isle and isle, after the sun,  
Into the port yonder, Peiraios called,  
To rest. 'T was home, they said; and all men  
wept.

I found their painted fanes and naked gods  
And all these children babbling in the sun.  
First did I hunger, knowing no trick or trade,  
Knowing nothing that sold brings money in.  
I talked not, nor could understand at all  
This Grecian race of laughter, pleasure, song.  
Pity, nor giving alms, nor anything  
That makes the spirit pure, is here. They live,  
And suffer the forgetfulness of life.  
This is my tale: One night I walked abroad  
Ere dawn a dreary hour, the market-place  
More dark than any jungle. Cold it was.  
I walked, when five cold fingers touched my arm, —  
Beside, a Phrygian slave. Often I'd seen  
Him and his fortune-table's dozen birds, —  
“Oneiropolos” called, “seller of dreams.”  
He looked me in the eyes and took my arm  
And led me here; awhile rehearsed his tricks:  
Teased with his forefinger a bird's soft throat, —  
Which leapt on 't, pecked and picked one single card.  
So did the Phrygian seven times, and went.  
Over Akropolis was golden dawn.  
Their naked gods all bloomed with light. The dark  
In violet veils dissolved down the steep heaven,  
And I stood here, selling to Athens dreams.

A dying town filled of a feeble race,  
Small gossips of their all-expressing tongue,  
Dancers and frolickers, philosophers

Drunken and sense-tied to the trembling world.  
 Hither from fifty climes men come and come,  
 Women and children come to see — 't is strange! —  
 This city of the old and marble things.

'T was miracle, say they, what sights were seen  
 Here, Sakhi, one great hundred years agone —  
 For they count Time upon their nervous hand.  
 Galleys and chariots, beauty, victory, gold,  
 And gods they had, whose fair procession walked  
 With maidens, cattle, priests and horse; whereof  
 Up in the shadows of the fane, yonder,  
 Is marble picture by a studied hand.  
 So at their pretty game the children played  
 Building and singing on. — But all is gone.  
 'T is vision, tale of poets, memory, nothing;  
 Now there is void shadow, blown by wind,  
 And the unstoried year is rolled away.

Here in the dying town I sell them dreams,  
 Here where the Phrygian stood. At evening  
 I knock at yonder gate in the High Wall,  
 And enter. Courteously a gentle man  
 Leads me within, to shade. Upon his lips  
 Their chattering Greek is low and lovelier.  
 I sit me down. My supper bowl of rice  
 He gives, saying, "My friend, rejoice in peace."  
 Down thro' his olive orchard, shadowy  
 And still and secret as the things of Ind,  
 The lily-like soft evening gathers dark.

Blest is his pious deed; for many hear  
The spoken solace of his quietude.  
To him what little coin I gather here,  
Not in exchange or manner of the West,  
I bring. For Epicurus aids the poor.

Peace! My words are many. Now peace to thee!  
For yonder comes as ever at this time  
Phryne, the rose and glory of their world.  
Her veil is wove of sunrise, and her face  
The white moon set between two clouds of black.  
Her eye's a firefly and her voice a viol.  
She walks as when a bird follows the sea.  
Here daily falls her piece of gold, — she's rich  
And timid as the shining meteor,  
And hovers mothlike round her destiny;  
For all her wings and beauty are for sale.

[1897]

## LUCRETIUS

*Sperata Voluptas Suavis Amicitiae*

SLOW Spring that, slipping thro' the silver light,  
 Like some young wanderer now returnest home  
 After strange years,  
 How like to me! to mine thy timorous plight!  
 Who quietly near my friendship's altar come  
 Where yet no God appears.

By many a deed I sought to win his love,  
 Made him a wreath of all my songs and hours, —  
 Most vain, most fair!  
 Now falls about the shroud my years have wove;  
 My evening drops her large, slow purple flowers  
 Thro' gardens of gold air.

To him this verse, to him this crown of leaves,  
 My supreme piety shall I commend:  
 This is my last,  
 Wreathed of what Youth endows and Age bereaves,  
 Bound by the fingers of a lover and friend,  
 Green with the vital past.

We sunder, he my Truth, I the desire.  
 I spread my wooing fingers, I would earn  
 His least address:  
 But parcels of the heaven-dispersèd fire,

Sky-severed exiles, we divinely learn  
To suffer loneliness.

My life was little in joy, little in pain;  
Mine were the wise denials, with none I coped  
To win the sky;  
And when I surely saw my love was vain —  
The joy of his sweet friendship I had hoped —  
I stilled. Now let me die, —

Now that the endless wind is growing warm,  
Richer the star, and flowers on many a slope  
Undo their sheath;  
O let us yield to life's divinest charm  
That lured us thro' the blasted field of hope,  
Let us return to death.

[1895]

### A G E I N Y O U T H

FROM far she's come, and very old,  
And very soiled with wandering.  
The dust of seasons she has brought  
Unbidden to this field of Spring.

She's halted at the log-barred gate.  
The May-day waits, a tangled spill  
Of light that weaves and moves along  
The daisied margin of the hill,

Where Nature bares her bridal heart,  
And on her snowy soul the sun  
Languors desirously and dull,  
An amorous pale vermillion.

She's halted, propped her rigid arms,  
With dead big eyes she drinks the west;  
The brown rags hang like clotted dust  
About her, save her withered breast.

A very soilure of a dream  
Runs in the furrows of her brow,  
And with a crazy voice she croons  
An ugly catch of long ago.

Its broken rhythm is hard and hoarse,  
Its sunken soul of music toils  
In precious ashes, dust of youth  
And lovely faces sorrow soils.

But look! Along the molten sky  
There runs strange havoc of the sun.  
"What a strange sight this is," she says,  
"I'll cross the field, I'll follow on."

The bars are falling from the gate.  
The meshes of the meadow yield;  
And trudging sunsetward she draws  
A journey thro' the daisy field.

The daisies shudder at her hem.  
Her dry face laughs with flowery light;  
An aureole lifts her soiled gray hair:  
"I'll on," she says, "to see this sight."

In the rude math her torn shoe mows  
Juices of trod grass and crushed stalk  
Mix with a soiled and earthy dew,  
With smear of petals gray as chalk.

The Spring grows sour along her track;  
The winy airs of amethyst  
Turn acid. "Just beyond the ledge,"  
She says, "I'll see the sun at rest."

And to the tremor of her croon,  
Her old, old catch of long ago,  
The newest daisies of the grass  
She shreds and passes on below. . . .

The sun is gone where nothing is  
And the black-bladed shadows war.  
She came and passed, she passed along  
That wet, black curve of scimitar.

In vain the flower-lifting morn  
With golden fingers to uprear  
The weak Spring here shall pause awhile:  
This is a scar upon the year.

[1895]

### IN SUMMER

It's growing evening in my soul,  
It darkens in.  
At the gray window now and then  
I hear them toll  
The hour-and-day-long chimes of St. Etienne.

Indeed I'd not have lived elsewhere  
Nor otherwise,  
Nor as the dreary saying is  
Been happier,  
To wear the love of life within my eyes.

My heart's desolate meadow ways,  
All wet and green,  
Opened for her to wander in  
A little space.  
I'd have it even so as it has been.

I've lived the days that fly away,  
I have a tale  
To tell when age has made me pale  
And hair of gray  
Excuse the fancy shaking out her sail.

No one shall know what I intend.  
Even as I feel  
The aching voices make appeal

And swell and blend,  
It seems to me I might stoop down to kneel

In memory of that day in June  
When, all the land  
Lying out in lazy summer fanned  
Now and anon  
By dying breezes from the Channel strand,

With nothing in our lives behind,  
Nothing before,  
In sunlight rich as melting ore  
And wide as wind  
We clomb the donjon tower of old Gisors

Thro' the portcullis botched in wood  
And up, in fear,  
A laddered darkness of a stair,  
Up to the good  
Sun-stricken prospect and the dazzling air.—

Even now I shade my breaking eyes.—  
And by her side  
Surely she saw my heart divide  
Like paradise  
For her to walk abroad in at noon-tide.

It swims about my memory.  
I feel around

The country steeped in summer swound;  
I feel the sigh  
That all these years within her breast was bound.

Her fingers in my hand are laid.  
I seem to gaze  
Into the colours of her face,  
And there is made  
A quiver in my knees like 'meadow-grass'.

That time I lived the life I have:  
A certain flower  
Blooms in a hundred years one hour,  
And what it gave  
Is richer, no, nor more, but all its power.

The chimes have ended for to-day.  
After midnight  
Solitude blows her candle out;  
Dreams go away,  
And memory falls from the mast of thought.

## IN AMPPEZZO

ONLY once more and not again — the larches  
Shake to the wind their echo, “Not again,” —  
We see, below the sky that over-arches  
Heavy and blue, the plain

Between Tofana lying and Cristallo  
In meadowy earths above the ringing stream:  
Whence interchangeably desire may follow,  
Hesitant as in dream,

At sunset, south, by lilac promontories  
Under green skies to Italy, or forth  
By calms of morning beyond Laviniores  
Tyrolward and to north:

As now, this last of latter days, when over  
The brownish field by peasants are undone  
Some widths of grass, some plots of mountain clover  
Under the autumn sun,

With honey-warm perfume that risen lingers  
In mazes of low heat, or takes the air,  
Passing delicious as a woman’s fingers  
Passing amid the hair;

When scythes are swishing and the mower’s muscle  
Spans a repeated crescent to and fro,  
Or in dry stalks of corn the sickles rustle,  
Tangle, detach and go,

Far thro' the wide blue day and greening meadow  
Whose blots of amber beaded are with sheaves,  
Wherever pallidly a cloud-shadow  
Deadens the earth and leaves:

Whilst high around and near, their heads of iron  
Sunken in sky whose azure overlights  
Ravine and edges, stand the gray and maron  
Desolate Dolomites, —

And older than decay from the small summit  
Unfolds a stream of pebbly wreckage down  
Under the suns of midday, like some comet  
Struck into gravel stone.

Faintly across this gold and amethystine  
September, images of summer fade;  
And gentle dreams now freshen on the pristine  
Viols, awhile unplayed,

Of many a place where lovingly we wander,  
More dearly held that quickly we forsake, —  
A pine by sullen coasts, an oleander  
Reddening on the lake.

And there, each year with more familiar motion,  
From many a bird and windy forestries,  
Or along shaking fringes of the ocean,  
Vapours of music rise.

From many easts the morning gives her splendour;  
The shadows fill with colours we forget;  
Remembered tints at evening grow tender,  
Tarnished with violet.

Let us away! soon sheets of winter metal  
On this discoloured mountain-land will close,  
While elsewhere Spring-time weaves a crimson petal,  
Builds and perfumes a rose.

Away! for here the mountain sinks in gravel.  
Let us forget the unhappy site with change,  
And go, if only happiness be travel  
After the new and strange: —

Unless 't were better to be very single,  
To follow some diviner monotone,  
And in all beauties, where ourselves commingle,  
Love but a love, but one,

Across this shadowy minute of our living,  
What time our hearts so magically sing,  
To meditate our fever, simply giving  
All in a little thing?

Just as here, past yon dumb and melancholy  
Sameness of ruin, while the mountains ail,  
Summer and sunset-coloured autumn slowly  
Dissipate down the vale;

And all these lines along the sky that measure  
Sorapis and the rocks of Mezzodi  
Crumble by foamy miles into the azure  
Mediterranean sea:

Whereas to-day at sunrise, under brambles,  
A league above the moss and dying pines  
I picked this little — in my hand that trembles —  
Parcel of columbines.

[1898]

### MNE MOS YNE

It's autumn in the country I remember.

How warm a wind blew here about the ways!  
And shadows on the hillside lay to slumber  
During the long sun-sweetened summer-days.

It's cold abroad the country I remember.

The swallows veering skimmed the golden grain  
At midday with a wing aslant and limber;  
And yellow cattle browsed upon the plain.

It's empty down the country I remember.

I had a sister lovely in my sight:  
Her hair was dark, her eyes were very sombre;  
We sang together in the woods at night.

It's lonely in the country I remember.

The babble of our children fills my ears,  
And on our hearth I stare the perished ember  
To flames that show all starry thro' my tears.

It's dark about the country I remember.

There are the mountains where I lived. The path  
Is slushed with cattle-tracks and fallen timber,  
The stumps are twisted by the tempests' wrath.

But that I knew these places are my own,  
I'd ask how came such wretchedness to cumber  
The earth, and I to people it alone.

It rains across the country I remember.

## LODOVICO MARTELLI

O GADDI, ope the casement, open wide  
And prop my pillow. But the window square  
Of light, of sky! tho' skies of Sicily  
Are not Firenze's. Ah, Firenze mine!  
Darkly I feel how's wasting all my life  
And dulls my brain; Death's guessing at my name.  
But utter strange it is to die. The word  
"Life" to my ear rings mournful-rich and stings  
The sleepy nerve of longing. This is pain —  
To stifle far from home, the heart suppressed  
By a handful of such years as other men  
Make nought of. Mercy of God, what mother e'er  
Fashioned a heart so brittle, a head and brain  
Whereof the tissues crack with fever? Why  
Live? to have tasted life? — and die of 't! aye,  
'T was little more.

The silly, silly tears.

But Gaddi, look, my head, my arm! Indeed  
Think you that I revive? Meseemeth now  
The Spring should soften Fiesole to flower  
And Colli meadows show to every wind  
New petals of anemony. How often  
By the divine immemorable days,  
By sober afterlight when marvel is  
And all Firenze turns a smouldering gold —  
How oft upon the hillside have we heard  
The melancholy ritornello! Ah

What Springs were they! Tell me if ever, since,  
The night was moonful, or a woman's eye  
Tearfully asked a softer question?  
How waved the paling heaven's embroidery,  
What wonder woke the odoured bloom of earth,  
What music had the tongue of Tuscany,  
What rhymes! How large a burial is the Past!

And thence away to Rome, to sovran Rome.  
What were the sickly earth without its Rome,  
Its gorgeous city where the revels are,  
Dice and cards and the old ecstatic wine  
That glints dark ruby, and superbly eyed  
The rich and unimpassioned courtesans,  
And Leo, Pope —

Yes, listen. One great once  
I saw the heavenly Householder, but far  
From 's home. Come nearer, Gaddi, hist! Ye know  
The Morosina who has Italia's hair,  
Whose eye is somewhat strangely more than blue,  
Who laughs like beech-leaves ringing in the light;  
Her kisses indolent as a warm rain. . . .  
I dream. The Pope said I? 'T was winter night.  
The wind fell edged and pointed down the lane  
Beneath the casement many have looked to, where  
Stood I, whistling a feverish tune. And straight  
'T was oped. I entered. All about mine ear  
I heard "My Lodovico," — such a sound  
Became the long and melancholy name!

I drew my mask, and darkly there I saw —  
Nothing, but felt and breathèd veriest Heaven.  
About our kiss did move her tender hair.  
Her breast to mine, her living arms, her brow —  
The memory aches me that it is so dead.  
She led me with a touch like melody  
That being fore'er more forward in the air  
Still guides. The cold and archèd corridor  
We traversed, I a dreamer sunsetwards  
And she the moving beauty of the day.  
We climbed the stair, a sick moon-gazer I  
Beneath her white and spirit-wingèd moon:  
Till in her chamber with our eyes we lit  
The owlish gloom about her tapestry.  
Upon his horse the hunter moved asleep  
And every falcon turnèd owl. Alone  
The cresset flickered on the fragrant oil,  
Shedding an old small light. And she and I  
We sung the night with kisses low adream.  
She said the wonder things in olden words;  
She made a music languorous as Time  
And rich as Summer, whilst her endless hair  
Seemed Aphrodite's o'er the shallow wave  
Thin-spread at midday. Odour never rose  
Sweet as her breasts', and musically she  
Did often turn her golden head away  
That gazing I might weave and weave my soul  
Into a necklace stringed of sleepy pearl  
Without a clasp. —

But then befell the thing.

Methought I heard, I heard indeed a door  
Noising — and near. I threw'r aside. "By Christ,  
A snare! now bless me—where's my sword? my mask?"  
"I love thy soul," she sang. "Is't Bembo?" "No."  
"The whorish trade!" Her shaking hand she put  
In mine. The step grew living near. I drew.  
Then most superbly on the threshold poised  
An all-black cavalier, save in the mask  
Two fires. "By Venus," quoth, "a lady's here  
That loves too widely to love well. Good sir,  
Suppose —" "A sword's enough for courtesy."  
He drew a wonder of Toledo blade  
That rang like music. Masterly we fenced  
And plied our gallant art Italian,  
Till on a sudden her most delirious form  
Rushed with a cry betwixt us. But she fell  
Half-sensed. We moved. Then with an elfish pass  
I pierced his hand. The weapon fell to ground, —  
And he was flying, — but next about his waist  
Her tender arms imploring pardon clung.  
He struggled, stumbled, fell; the mask removed;  
By Jesu God in Heaven, verily I  
Then saw great Leo's face, the Pope's of Rome.  
I shuddered as a reed, my brain rocked, all  
Withered together crumbling in my soul:  
I fled, yet with a backward look to see  
The mistress of the gods make of her hair,  
Her golden hair, a Pontiff's chasuble. —

Dost thou believe I'm dying of darkish things,  
Of poison — ?

    Ah, my heart's a crust of ash.  
And glowing chains are piled about my head.  
Raving? Not I. Give me no drugs. The world  
I charioted have left in dust behind.  
For I was Poet. — They said, they said "A soft  
Poet, who stole Petrarca's melodies  
And spoiled his robbery." Soft in verse I was,  
A master had I like, forsooth, the rest. . . .  
But nothing timeless said! Full well I know't,  
The shaft is on my heart's bow, poised, unloosed!  
While Raphael delves a ceiling into skies  
Peopling his coloured thought, and Agnolo  
Makes the fresh-quarried adamant to sweat  
Ferocious agony, or in peace reclined  
To look long looks abroad the shifting world.  
I? why, I'd sing for them, I Lodovico  
Martelli. I would send my songs full-sailed  
Over the waves and waters of the years.  
Let them be painter, sculptor: poet, I.  
For your unquiet thoughts, the horrid strong,  
I have them, — writ? not yet! but here's my heart,  
Feel it! so tramped the innumerable host  
When Rome was burned. And very vast a tale  
Were half its history. Often have I stood  
On hills high up, by sorry coasts, alone  
Passing my vision angrily. I thought  
To have plucked the yellow comets by their hair,

To have braided meteors, and from 'hind the moon  
Robbed her society of chanting tides.

I'd stand, my back to the seaward cliffs, at bay  
And fight the wave. Completed earth's a leaf  
Turning in space along with the other dust  
That blinds the eye of God.

Away, away!

Canst see the waters from the window? Help,  
Help, sir. I've climb Vesuvius of old,  
Tasting its breath — 't was half so steep. Behold,  
Yon rolls in wide and worldly rhythm the sea,  
Greatest and eldest poet. Yonder chants  
The epic wave in rich monotony.  
Mine eye seems big as heaven. And far abroad  
From Even's distaff floats the purple wool.  
Wet-eyed she sits; the light for love of her  
Becomes a moon but to behold her die —  
The moon — Firenze! Is Firenze near?  
Methinks 't were half a journey.

Ah, but were we there!

How fresh her lip is graven on my heart.  
I see her, palely. But — tell me, who knows —  
Is she not waxen, like me, somewhat old?  
For something long has happened. All's ago.  
I was ages ago, and in the world  
We were together young. Say, am I dead  
That I'm so far? Perhaps shall I return.  
Bid Laura wait for April; I return,  
I that so endless loved her, love her. Say:

“Within the colour-cupped anemones  
Lieth his heart, and all the leaves are he.  
The gentle ecstasy of earth, the wind  
That lifts so happily thy hair is he,  
And he the Spring that holds thee all about.”  
O Gaddi, I shall not return. My mood  
Is his who sits upon a farther shore,  
Waiting and sick.

It’s night and strangely cold.  
To bed! ’t is bitter cold. My very breast  
Quivers. Hold me, good Gaddi, — or I shake  
To death. My body’s dry. Christ, what a world!  
Water, good soul, water! Hold thou the cup.

[1896]

## DOLOROSA

THOU hadst thy will.  
How weary sounds the rain!  
The firelight wanders in the window-pane.  
Thou art still.

Let me a space,  
Now that the daylight dies,  
Lie back against thee and with upward eyes  
Love thy face.

Forgive my fear,  
But — darling — hold me fast!  
A little while the heartache will be past.  
Patience, dear.

Give me thy hands  
And bending closely o'er  
Lay thy two lips to mine for evermore.  
Death commands.

P I T Y

AN old light smoulders in her eye.  
There! she looks up. They grow and glow  
Like mad laughs of a rhapsody  
That flickers out in woe.

An old charm slips into her sighs,  
An old grace sings about her hand.  
She bends: it's musically wise.  
I cannot understand.

Her voice is strident; but a spell  
Of fluted whisper silkens in —  
The lost heart in a moss-grown bell,  
Faded — but sweet — but thin.

She bows like waves — waves near the shore.  
Her hair is in a vulgar knot —  
Lovely, dark hair, whose curves deplore  
Something she's well forgot.

She must have known the sun, the moon,  
On heaven's warm throat star-jewels strung —  
It's late. The gas-lights flicker on.  
Young, only in years, but young!

One might remind her, say the street  
Is dark and vile now day is done.  
But would she care, she fear to meet —  
But there she goes — is gone.

## SONG

A BUD has burst on the upper bough  
(The linnet sang in my heart to-day);  
I know where the pale green grasses show  
By a tiny runnel, off the way,  
And the earth is wet.  
(A cuckoo said in my brain: "Not yet.")

I nabbed the fly in a briar rose  
(The linnet to-day in my heart did sing);  
Last night, my head tucked under my wing,  
I dreamed of a green moon-moth that glows  
Thro' ferns of June.  
(A cuckoo said in my brain: "So soon?")

Good-bye, for the pretty leaves are down  
(The linnet sang in my heart to-day);  
The last gold bit of upland 's mown,  
And most of summer has blown away  
Thro' the garden gate.  
(A cuckoo said in my brain: "Too late.")

## RALSTON

To thee, that all this wretchedness be ended  
And I become in my disaster free,  
I bring my broken life to be amended.  
Take me, O sea,

O sea of California, thou Pacific,  
For which the multitude of mortals bound  
Go trembling headlong down and with terrific  
Outcry are drowned.

Take me out of the earth that I remain not  
To tell to gossips in a hovel tales  
Of what I was. I who have squandered cannot  
Play with the scales.

I who with power and riches stood surrounded  
And gave as princes, and without a throne  
Was King the greater that for name I sounded  
Only my own:

I must have gone away, not die nor wither  
But vanish like a rolling sound of brass,  
A comet burst which — without whence or whither  
Or wherefore — *was*.

For men born out of yesterday are yestern,  
For men to-day are of to-day. And we,  
We need only ourselves, we men of Western  
Democracy.

By my own sinews and own brain, unweakened  
By lineage and generations, I  
Did what I did, and with the wide world reckoned  
To live and die.

I gave and had no memory of measure.  
Others can tell who rollicked at my feast;  
And in my palace there was greater pleasure  
Than in the East.

I did enjoy and drank the beaker frothing;  
I have kindled the splendours every one.  
Tho' my magnificence to-day be nothing,  
I say, I won, —

I won. And fortune cast me her dismissal!  
Of traps and treasures whereof I could say  
'T is mine! there's not so much as rubbish. This all  
Was yesterday.

Squalid and sad where I before did conquer,  
Doubtless again I could have victory,  
Again lie in the golden gates at anchor —  
Receive me, sea!

There sinks the sun in dusts of sulphur glowing  
Gibbous and red; and flaking toward the shore  
Like hosts of scarlet willow-leaves bestrewing  
The sapphire floor.

And from the country evening scarce arisen  
Out of the flowering oranges the breeze, —  
The breeze will carry me to the horizon,  
To silences

Of sky and wave, the dark, the swirling eddy,  
The sinking down out of the vital air,  
And down out of myself, down from the giddy  
Glories that were.

## DRIFTWOOD

## I

HEAVEN is lovelier than the stars,  
 The sea is fairer than the shore;  
 I've seen beyond the sunset bars  
 A colour more.

A thought is floating round my mind,  
 And there are words that will not come.  
 Do you believe, as I, the wind  
 Somewhere goes home ?

## II

In grassy paths my spirit walks.  
 The earth I travel speaks me fair  
 And still thro' many voices talks  
 Of that deep oneness which we are.

I love to see the rolling sod  
 Mixing and changing ever grow  
 To other forms,— and this is God  
 And all of God and all we know.

I love to feel the dead dust whirled  
 About my face, to touch the dust;  
 And this large muteness of the world  
 Gives me vitality of trust.

Here on the earth I lie a space.  
The quiet earth that knows no strife.  
I mix with her and take my place  
In the dark matter that is life.

[1882]

III

I saw the moon and heard her sing,  
I saw her sing and heard the moon.  
For light and song went wing and wing.

So many a ship and many a star  
Abroad the sky and sea are two.  
We know it not for being far.

So two fair flowers make a whole  
In corner meadows of the spring.  
It takes two hearts to make a soul;

And down the cloudy days they fare  
Married in Beauty, as of old  
The lovers thro' the infernal air.

IV

Between the sun and moon  
A voice now vague now clear —  
Do you hear? —  
Says "Wander on."

And on the hearthstone black  
The embers poignantly —  
Do you see? —  
Spell "Come back."

## R E Q U I E S C A M

COME to the window! You're the painter used  
 To shadow-in pools of light far out to sea,  
 Or fix it where the solitary wave  
 Rears with a shimmering scoop before the shore, —  
 A glorious wave! But now look out awhile  
 And love my view, from our suburban height  
 The squalid champaign zigzagged by the Seine.

I'm old, most of my labour done. My chisel  
 One of these days among the pellets of dry clay  
 Will lie and rust. I have immensely worked,  
 And hitherto seen nothing but the Form  
 Staring upon my eyeballs. Years and years,  
 Whether alone along the shining streets  
 O' the city or in companionship, I've looked  
 So long and seen away so fixedly  
 That space scrolled up, I seeing none the less:  
 Except some shape, some woman lightning-bleached,  
 Pinned to the ground, lay dreadful in my road.  
 O Labour, everlasting vanity,  
 That fills her cracking pitcher and falls down  
 Face to the earth, the water in her hair!

Into a bole of clay all my life long  
 I've stared my visions in, and, thumbing, seen  
 Materialize obscurely to a line  
 The long desire of Nature turning home.

So strains itself out of the sea a shape  
With loads of weedy tide up to the land,  
Straining to touch and taste, to lose and die,  
Straining fore'er miserably unsatisfied.  
Between the toad and lyre-bird, 'twixt the snail  
And greyhound all is struggle: the which is vain.  
For by our bases we're firm sunken-down  
In the element: and whenever a little while  
Yearning Illusion flutters up the sky,  
She presently swings to the gasping pitch,  
To fall bolt-like.

I say, all my life long close to I've stared  
Into the clay, have with my chisel rasped  
The marble off and stroked the lovely limbs,  
The breasts of women and the lips of boys  
In stone. Again, into the mould I've poured  
The wretched desolation of my dreams  
And bruised here and there the bronze. All this  
I have done my life long, and not so much  
As lifted up my eyes.

But now at last  
I pleasurable look to either side.  
For I would paint some landscapes ere I die,  
One or two landscapes of the view you see,  
The squalid plain meandered by the Seine.  
There, when there's moon, thro' fumes of gray and black  
The silver river curls away; beyond

It's night and vapid darkness infinite.  
And sitting at this window, I suppose  
A pallet on my thumb, and brushes and  
The colours gently mixing with their oil:—  
Leaving my marbles in imagination  
For final solace in a softer art.  
You, painter, have enjoyed with all your self;  
You've little looked into the dark. But I  
Forged in the night. It's resting-time, I'm old.  
Landscape will ease me somewhat toward the end.

[1900]

**ERIDE**

DULL words that swim upon the page  
Thro' filmy tears of joy and pain!  
Poor silly words, my only gage!  
Mere words, recurrent as refrain!

Ye prove me language less than nought  
And all the loss of utterance.  
Ye give me scraps of withered thought  
And sounds that meet as by a chance.

If I should find ye once again,  
If you should come again to me,  
Dull words about my joy and pain,  
Mere words, what would ye signify?

**E R I D E**

I

Love, I marvel what you are!  
Heaven in a pearl of dew,  
Lilies hearted with a star —  
All are you.

Spring along your forehead shines  
And the summer blooms your breast.  
Graces of autumnal vines  
Round you rest.

Birds about a limpid rose  
Making song and light of wing  
While the warm wind sunny blows, —  
So you sing.

Darling, if the little dust,  
That I know is merely I,  
Have availed to win your trust,  
Let me die.

Brown eyes I say, yet say I blue.  
I think her mouth is a melody,  
Her bosom a petal sunned and new;  
Her hand is a passing sigh.

Blue eyes I say, yet somehow brown.  
Her mouth is the verge of all repose;  
Her breast a smoothed-out viol tone;  
Her hand is an early rose.

Be her eyes of blue or brown indeed,  
Be colour or music what she is,  
I nothing know. But my life's own need  
Is the fancy of her kiss.

Clouds thro' the heaven flit  
Aprilward.  
There's the bud of a violet  
On the sward.  
Branch and breeze sympathize  
Ere they play, —  
I know that it's Spring to-day  
By your eyes.

How shall I hold you fast  
Now you are here?  
A tremor, and you have passed.  
And this year  
Only of all is ours  
Only is mine! —  
I see in your blue eyes shine  
All the year's flowers.

Hereafter I'll call you Spring,  
Little girl!  
And christen each clustering  
Delicate curl  
Some lovely meadow's name  
In the South,  
Where they say that music and youth  
Stay the same.

I held these tulips first, before  
Bringing you them.  
I passed the love I bear you o'er  
Flower and stem.  
And I would leave them at your door, —

If at your heart's door they might stand!  
Keeping awhile  
The world behind their petals and  
Crimson smile, —  
Like seas hid by a meadow-land.

A trill of leaves is in the wold;  
I feel the wings of summer pass,  
And sunlight in big drops of gold  
Falls on the seedy feathered grass.

Some tiny cuckoo never seen  
Blows his own echo mild as mist.  
A deer there, stirring in the green!  
A squirrel, where the branches kissed.

Far through, a sweep of aspen-boughs  
And birches whitening tow'rd the crest  
Reclines, like river-grass, and flows  
Along the summer to the West,

Farther away, till last of all  
In milky hazes lying furled  
Is — nothing more. 'T is we recall  
Infinity back to the world.

In the bow-window that looks out  
Over the sunset-coloured bay  
We sat one evening, wondering and in doubt.

The water plashing on the quay  
Roused the warm air, and half-awake  
One hill we knew was changing golden-gray.

We strained our sight upon the lake;  
We dared not anything to say,  
For fear your heart and mine might haply break.

Our tired eyes soon filled with tears,  
And we said nothing. But your hand  
Was like a heart that understands and hears.

[1896]

We missed the sunset, love, to-night —  
The sunset on the sea that sings,  
Folding about its heart of light  
The large and melancholy wings.

A snowy gull may 've moved along  
The rose and gray and violet bands,  
Serene as thought and pure as song,  
Beyond our line of open sands;

A moonbeam on the fisher net,  
A sail that lay upon the sea,  
A rim of pebbles darkly wet:  
It all was not for you and me.

A sunset lost, a life foregone!  
Beauty that asked our heart and died!  
What said we? did we match the Sun  
With aught of Heart, my love? — My bride,

One look you gave was twice a sky.  
I kissed your hand, you said a word

That greater is for melody  
Than all the tides a coast-land heard.

One sunset lost, one look the more! —  
The night is quieting the foam.  
Hear you? “Come,” says the endless shore,  
And all the waves in murmur, “Come.”

He rests upon her knee his tired head;  
His eye, long worried, sleeps;  
And she, whose perfect love has nothing said,  
Her hand upon his forehead keeps.

Thro’ darkening windows blows the ancient spring;  
A planet trembles, kind.  
Her large wet eyes are vastly wondering,  
Her happy love resembles wind.

The breeze about her finger stirs his hair,  
And her breath rises, falls.  
So their unfolding presence thro’ the air  
In soft and low surprises calls.

He touches her in dream and follows her,  
For nearness of her fails.  
And the spring night of green and gossamer  
Around beloved and lover pales.

II

I hear you singing in my breast,  
I hear you chanting in my mind.  
Is it the wind?

I feel your form upon my eyes,  
I feel your fingers press my sight.  
Is it the night?

I hear the little noise of feet  
And footsteps come and come again.  
Is it the rain?

And all alone with memory  
My brain grows anxious for the day.  
You're long away.

“Will you look down once more, just once?  
Down to the ground and keep your veil  
Drawn o'er your half-guessed countenance  
And smile — so frail?

“Thank you! For I have had a friend  
Whose image came most vividly  
Upon my soul, when with that bend  
You looked from me.

---

“Gone? Yes! you cannot think how far,  
Beyond the uttermost of thought.  
She’s grown, as far things do, a star  
In heaven’s hand caught.

“But stars, you know, are very cold  
And always white. They never bless  
Just you, and in the night’s great fold  
Grow vague and less.

“And so it’s sweet to feel sometimes  
A colour, gesture, sound — a turn  
That makes the heart grow dull with rhymes  
And the soul’s lips burn.

“Yes! sometimes fast about my heart  
Something troubles me that I knew;  
I find a stranger made me start,  
As now did you.

“So pray don’t think me rude. That face —  
For the mere memory I would die.  
You’ve warmed my life with your — her grace.  
Good-night, good-bye.”

[1896]

If you should lightly, as I’ve known you, come  
And find me of an evening crying here

At open windows of a changing home,  
While beyond garden, houses, tree, and dome  
Fades out the day and year;

If you should gently touch my shoulder, and  
Turning I'd see as with a sweet surprise  
You there, above me and about me, stand,  
While the warm sunset passed a lucid hand  
Over your face and eyes;

If then you softly, as I've heard you, said  
That all was well, I know not what or why,  
But just for words' sake told me; while your head  
Moved round, you passed away; and in your stead  
An autumn night came by:

Still would the happiness of having stood  
With one so nearly you tho' gone so soon,  
Bring to my solitude a little good,—  
As one who's gladdened in a midnight wood  
For having seen the moon.

Sometimes you seem so far away,  
The very noise of thinking lulls,  
And, on my vision, colour dulls  
To vapour with sick wings of gray.

I wander out of Time and Mind.  
The sense of my own life is lost.  
One thought goes touching like a ghost  
That found yet knows not where to find.

And all I know is just the jar  
Of chime that trembles in my ear;  
And all I ask is if the year  
Is never tired as others are.

You charm a window in the South,  
Your brow seen by the golden star;  
And through warm dreams the gentle war  
Of thought lures laughter to your mouth.

The wind lulls in the olive grove  
And all becomes a vaporous sigh —  
Low preludes to your ecstasy  
Who love too much to think of love. —

October is in midnight swound  
With just a vague gray blot for moon,  
And like a scum the rotting brown  
Of dead leaves drifts along the ground;

While I sit waiting for a time  
I know not how, and marvel forth

Upon the vastness of the North,  
Till marvel mellows into rhyme.

I heard a dead leaf run. It crossed  
My way. For dark I could not see.  
It rattled crisp and thin with frost  
Out to the lea.  
My steps I hast'ned, I was lost  
For all the grief that came to me.  
For now and ever thro' the host  
Of sounds that blow from shrub and tree, —  
A little echo sharply tossed, —  
The footstep chills me of her ghost;  
And knowing naught I weep most drearily.

III

There's just a bit of twilight yet,  
A glossy gray that floats the sea  
From yonder, where the daylight set,  
To me.

All else is violet growing dark.  
Southward, a sorrow breaks the sky.  
The tide in languor of its mark  
Is high.

And old night thickens on the strand.  
There is no motion but the wave's,  
Along the leagues of listening sand  
That raves.

And nothing now. The lighthouse lit.  
If ships there be, they're far from coast.  
All's safe. But something infinite  
Is lost.

One spot where every day declines  
In a last red ray  
From the circle poised on a hill of pines;

One knoll, where an elm's twist-branches play  
With the air, elate;  
And below, our bench of a battered gray:

In summer, 't was bright — when the sun sets late,  
Too late for regret!  
And the winds lie down somewhere to wait

While daylight goes and gray streaks fret  
The heaven's blues  
And round the mid-sky night's arms are met.

But we went to-day and the long sinews  
Of our elm were lame  
With wind that ran in the day's lost clues.

Early the sun set, vague and tame.  
Thro' gathering mists  
The rain fell chiding us why we came.

A drizzle fills the autumn day.  
The sun will never here come back,  
And weeds and foliage in decay  
Lie draggled in the cart-wheel's track.

From blackened woods along the plain  
A vapour passes out, a sound  
Of boughs grown weak thro' nights of rain,  
That sink and shatter on the ground.

The meadow turf is all a swamp,  
There's nothing left of summer. Come.

The air turns dark and deadly damp.  
Come, for it's very far to home.

The year for you and me  
Is nearly done.  
The leaves there, two or three,  
Are brown.  
Not a bird sings.  
It is time to think of other things.

Your secret was my hope,  
Your deeper name;  
And you perhaps did ope  
The same.—  
Only the word  
For being spoke yet was not heard.

And as a leaf that knows  
It cannot meet  
Another leaf that grows  
So sweet,  
Hearing it call,  
Springs in the autumn wind, to fall:

So did I hoping doubt,  
Till thro' the dark  
Falling away, went out  
The spark, —

**Ever to be  
A star gone down below the sea.**

**Not that, if you had known at all,  
You would have done what now you do.  
God knows, no blame shall ever fall  
Of mine on you.  
I only marvel that it all be true.**

**They say that love's a mustard seed  
Upon the acres of the heart;  
It spreads from one part like a weed  
To another part.  
Yet Spring is single and the days depart.**

**I know not why, but so it is!  
That pain is such a simple thing.  
Here to your hand I bring my kiss,  
And yet nothing  
Can tell you nearly what it is I bring.**

**And why? — It's hard to cipher Fates  
And Distances, as yours from me.  
Not science even separates  
So fixedly; —  
And then we tantalize our destiny!**

Yes, marvel how the chances cross  
And weave these spider-webs of wire.  
Men live who say there's gain in loss!  
And yet Desire  
Revives like ferns on a November fire.

It comes to only a memory.  
We have too many memories,  
And somehow I believe we die  
Of things like these,  
Loving what was not, might not be, nor is.

[1896]

Like a pearl dropped in red dark wine,  
Your pale face sank within my heart,  
Not to be mine, yet always mine.

Your eyes, like flowers from apart  
Their frail and shaded gates of dream,  
Looked all a meadow's light astart

With sunrise, and your smile did seem  
As when below a letting rain  
The water-drops with sunset gleam.

I thought my vision was not vain;  
I felt my cramped heart stir and move  
Which now is pressed with little pain.

I dreamed the dream one wonders of, —  
Your face of pearl, so pale and wise.  
I saw, and murmured “Life is Love.”

The dust of folly filled my eyes.  
I sang, and operied in your name  
Crocuses yellow with moonrise.

I played with shadows at their game;  
The meadow thought my song was wind.  
I called the sunrise up: it came.

Sweet sun-warmed grasses did I bind  
In fancies of your hair. My song  
Was you, and you were all my mind. —

The charm, the splendour, and the wrong  
Will drive you thro’ the earth, to try  
Of you and pleasure which is strong, —

While I remember. Cry on cry  
My autumn’s gone. A horrid blast  
Blows out my sunset from the sky.

Nothing is left and all is past;  
Rain settles like a quiet air.  
And as a pearl in red wine cast  
Glowes like a drop of moonlight there,  
Your face possesses my despair.

Receive my love; I ask no more.  
Receive, I have no more to give.  
The heart and spirit of me bore  
All of this little gift. Receive!

I fancied as in dream I passed  
My arms afraid with care and strove  
About you, to have gleaned at last  
Some late and stilly wished-for love, —

No more the wild wide flames that leap  
Out of a moment down our years,  
To smoulder in endangering sleep,  
To glitter under tender tears, —

But something dear and gradual  
Within your slowly opening soul:  
Your nearly love, your nearly all  
Which comes with years to be the very whole.

You would give otherwise and more,  
Give much more and forget you gave, —  
As over-seas in summer pour  
The wide blue swinging breadths of wave.

Yes, and your vision of desire  
Is richer than the sunrise and  
Profounder than the sea and higher  
Than the last light these heavens command.

You suffer thirst, and waiting brood  
Impatiently one day to strain  
From out this life of mood and food  
The stuffs of ecstasy and pain:—

Till squandering in royal waste  
The passion of your youth upon  
Some pitiable heart, you taste  
The wines and fever of oblivion!

I know. — Your dream is mine, that was.  
And quickly far within your eyes  
All of my life began to pass  
And wander out in seas and skies.

But you, whom all my life adored,  
While I go following in your way,  
Can not so much as speak the word; —  
For there be lies no tongue can say.

How strange it is, the point we lack  
Just to possess the spirit's own,  
And failing this, to tremble back  
Among unfinished things alone!

Pass by, dear heart, — and take from me  
This charm for which a diver dove  
Of old down the unruined sea, — .  
And taking mine, give to another thy love.

No, no, 't is very much too late.  
I thought it mockery that you said  
You loved me; but a certain fate  
Lowers your voice and bows your head.  
I tell you, you desire to wake the dead.

"T is pitiful so to drag out  
The sorry quarrel in our souls,  
Till even the blood suspends in doubt  
And each full impulse backward rolls.  
Meantime the hour regardless passing tolls.

Yes! think how year on year is gone.  
You went your way and hummed your dreams  
Of passion and oblivion  
In lands where terrible sunbeams  
Shiver upon the leaping arch of streams.

Your heart was violent and you stretched  
Tiptoe after the stars your hand!—  
"T was but a willow-bough you fetched.  
The argosies of your command  
Returned, saying beyond there was no land.

You cursed the woman's life for lame.  
To do! you cried, and labouring  
Like men bring in the distant aim!—

What was this aim you needs must bring,  
Your one, your altogether desired thing?

You knew not, doubting day by day.  
Like yours how many lives are lived!  
How seldom all is given away,  
How little of every gift received!  
How the heart most of all is least believed!

When at your going my grief was new  
And the long future all to waste,  
I said farewell to more than you:  
I wandered up into the Past  
And wandering have imagined peace at last.

Still, perhaps, under leaves that lie  
You'd feel the roots of sorrow end  
Here in my bosom dyingly:  
Mere threads they are, too frail to tend!  
I've done with my own living, O my friend!

For what were gained if I were yours?  
Fever and frenzy of the blood,  
The pleasure which no surfeit cures,  
Endless desire, hunger, feud —  
And, at the end of passion, solitude. —

You know how, born by a small hearth,  
While out in the sad dark it snows

And 't is for months an unseen earth,  
The soul as by remembrance goes  
After the warm vineyard and burning rose,

To live long years by stream and hill  
Within the southern light, with men  
Who speak delicious language: — till  
The pain of being alien  
Urges one elsewhere yet not home again.

So are our lives. I love you more.  
But other hearts by destiny  
Must needs possess what they adore  
And have it, to live with and to die,  
To strangle or soothe with kisses. Not so I.

By silences within a dream  
And bird-songs of a spring sunrise,  
To the onward measure of a stream  
Nearer the sea where quiet is,  
I love you more, much more, but otherwise.

If I have wronged you in the days  
Bygone but unforgotten now,  
I make no pleading for your grace.  
My tongue is bitter. Leave me, go.

You have no pity, none. You live  
Impatient and unreconciled.  
Nay, were you a mother, I believe  
You never could well love your child.

You've cracked the sense of life and death  
With passions in you that despise  
The thing you love and choke its breath,  
Till unrecriminate it dies, —

It dies to you; and nothing then,  
Nor art nor hope nor force nor spell  
Can worry back the lost again, —  
Lost, lost, and irrecoverable.

And then, God knows, some things there be  
Where never pardon yet was known:  
What words have leapt from you to me!  
Enough, henceforward I'm my own.

Yes, men are selfish — Tell me, you  
Who pluck my thoughts for flying fast,  
Ask all the years to be, and rue  
The unalterably separate past,

What is this that is *generous*?  
Can just a word we used to know

In childhood, commonly, to us  
Have grown a vulgar riddle so?

Sometimes I think we never met,  
Such immense walls of iron and ice  
Between us infinitely set  
Spring blind into the spirit's skies.

Sometimes I think we never met,—  
'T had surely better been, to spare  
This nervous wringing of regret,  
This hope that tightens to despair.

We have not understood, for all  
We deeply lived and clearly said.  
And without knowledge love must fall,—  
Like this of ours, that lying dead

Clamours for burial. It is time,  
It was time in much earlier days,  
Before we soiled our lips with crime,  
That you and I went our two ways.

## v

Now in the palace gardens warm with age,  
On lawn and flower-bed this afternoon  
The thin November-coloured foliage  
Just as last year unfastens lilting down,

And round the terrace in gray attitude  
The very statues are becoming sere  
With long presentiment of solitude.  
Most of the life that I have lived is here,

Here by the path and autumn's earthy grass  
And chestnuts standing down the breadths of sky:  
Indeed I know not how it came to pass,  
The life I lived here so unhappily.

Yet blessing over all! I do not care  
What wormwood I have ate to cups of gall;  
I care not what despairs are buried there  
Under the ground, no, I care not at all.

Nay, if the heart have beaten, let it break!  
I have not loved and lived but only this  
Betwixt my birth and grave. Dear Spirit, take  
The gratitude that pains, so deep it is.

When Spring shall be again, and at your door  
You stand to feel the mellower evening wind,

Remember if you will my heart is pure,  
Perfectly pure and altogether kind;

That not an aftercry of all our strife  
Troubles the love I give you and the faith:  
Say to yourself that at the ends of life  
My arms are open to you, life and death.—

How much it aches to linger in these things!  
I thought the perfect end of love was peace  
Over the long-forgiven sufferings.  
But something else, I know not what it is,

The words that came so nearly and then not,  
The vanity, the error of the whole,  
The strong cross-purpose, oh, I know not what  
Cries dreadfully in the distracted soul.

The evening fills the garden, hardly red;  
And autumn goes away, like one alone.  
Would I were with the leaves that thread by thread  
Soften to soil, I would that I were one.

**SONNETS**



S O N N E T S

You say, Columbus with his argosies  
Who rash and greedy took the screaming main  
And vanished out before the hurricane  
Into the sunset after merchandise,  
Then under western palms with simple eyes  
Trafficked and robbed and triumphed home again:  
You say this is the glory of the brain  
And human life no other use than this?  
I then do answering say to you: The line  
Of wizards and of saviours, keeping trust  
In that which made them pensive and divine,  
Passes before us like a cloud of dust.  
What were they? Actors, ill and mad with wine,  
And all their language babble and disgust.

THEY say that Cleopatra who of yore  
Received the moon on her dishevelled hair,  
Looking into his eyes, and breathed the fair  
Low wind along Mediterranean's shore  
When Summer swelled the stars, — Now at her door  
The wanderer sees her like a jewel flare,  
And drawn by passion thro' the beating air  
To her, he falls, her dagger at the core.  
Through rifts of scudding shadow, while his trance  
Blackens in death, he feels about him lean  
Her olive breasts and arms, and in her glance  
Great wings of fire and midnight closing in:  
His wasting arms do make a vain advance.  
So I unto the life I would have been.

[1898]

THEY lived enamoured of the lovely moon,  
The dawn and twilight on their gentle lake.  
Then Passion marvellously born did shake  
Their breasts and drove them into the mid-noon.  
Their lives did shrink to one desire, and soon  
They rose fire-eyed to follow in the wake  
Of one eternal thought, — when sudden brake  
Their hearts. They died, in miserable swoon.  
Of all their agony not a sound was heard.  
The glory of the Earth is more than they.  
She asks her lovely image of the day:  
A flower grows, a million boughs are green,  
And over moving ocean-waves the bird  
Chases his shadow and is no more seen

[1898]

## ON RODIN'S "L'ILLUSION, SCEUR D'ICARE"

SHE started up from where the lizard lies  
Among the grasses' dewy hair, and flew  
Thro' leagues of lower air until the blue  
Was thin and pale and fair as Echo is.  
Crying she made her upward flight. Her cries  
Were naught, and naught made answer to her view.  
The air lay in the light and slowly grew  
A marvel of white void in her eyes.  
She cried: her throat was dead. Deliriously  
She looked, and lo! the Sun in master mirth  
Glowed sharp, huge, cruel. Then brake her noble eye.  
She fell, her white wings rocking down the abyss,  
A ghost of ecstasy, backward to earth,  
And shattered all her beauty in a kiss.

[1898]

## I

My friend, who in this March unkind, uncouth,  
Biding the full-blown Summer and the skies  
That change not, stayest unmoved and true and wise  
That in thy love thou lovest not me but Truth,  
What should we fear that Age corrode with ruth  
Our loves, who love the thing that never dies,  
Building us archways unto Paradise  
Of all that greets the soul's all-flowering youth ?  
So is it, that often parted, rarely met,  
And never blessed with gifts of genial Time  
Wherein might grow the seed we have but sown,  
Our hearts remember tho' our minds forget  
How on from year to year and clime to clime  
Stretches the love that makes of all but one.

[1894]

Your image walks not in my common way.  
Rarely I conjure up your face, recall  
Your language, think to hear your footstep fall  
In my lost home or see your eyes' sweet play.  
Rather you share the life that sees not day,  
Immured within the spirit's deep control,  
Where thro' the tideless quiets of the soul  
Your kingdom stretches far and far away.  
For these our joys and griefs are less than we.  
The deeper truths ask not our daily thought —  
Their strength is peace, they know that we believe.  
And whatsoever of sublime there be  
Reaches and deepens and at last is wrought  
Into that life we are but do not live.

[1894]

WERE you called home and I were left to grief,  
I'd not go down disconsolate to the shore  
And brooding mix my language in the roar  
Of waves in spasm upon the tortured reef;  
Nor climb the lonely mountain where the leaf  
Sings its wide whisper and the ravens soar  
From shadows of unholy ellebore  
Loved by the owlets, blind and dull and deaf.  
I should not loudly mourn and vex the earth  
With strewings of my ashes; none would find  
My reft soul's sorrow in the gushing eye.  
But my dull world would be a world of dearth,  
Cheerless the sunrise, the sweet sky unkind  
And life grayer, my heart not asking why.

[1894]

IN A CHURCHYARD

How strange, beneath the blue and happy sky  
And the reviving greenery of the trees  
So pale their shadow blows along the breeze,  
To read on polished graves the little cry  
Of this delirious immortality!  
Well was it said for all, for each of these  
“The poor in heart,” who still in death displease  
The flowers and wind and youth that passes by.  
How but for them the children of the earth  
Here, where the grass is fresh and glittering,  
Would share with herb and beast the common birth!  
And when they’d played away this day of Spring  
How sweetly would they fold at evening  
Their petals, hands, and wings at nature’s hearth.

WHEN I hereafter shall recover thee  
And, on the further margin fugitive  
Silently bringing up, if aught survive  
The raging wind and old disastrous sea,  
I disembark, O darling, verily  
To hold thee to my heart, to feel alive  
The tremor of thy lips, thy bosom, — it will drive  
The dark in shreds out of eternity.  
Sometimes I ask me why the morning sun  
Returns, or later, when the day is done,  
I let the dreams about my pillow strain;  
But then it sounds across my dying brain  
Like torrents in the moonlight foaming on  
Between enormous mountains to the plain.

Tho' inland far with mountains prisoned round,  
Oppressed beneath a space of heavy skies,  
Yet hear I oft the far-off water-cries  
And vague vast voices which the winds confound.  
While as a harp I sing, touched with the sound  
Most secret to its soul, the visions rise  
In stately dream, and lifting up my eyes  
I see the naked mountains beacon-crowned.  
Far in the heaven the golden moon illumes,  
The crowded stars toil in the webs of night  
And the sharp meteors seam the higher glooms.  
Then shifts my dream: the mellow evening falls;  
Alone upon the shore in the wet light  
I stand, and hear the infinite sea that calls.

[1894]

ON SOME SHELLS FOUND INLAND

THESE are my murmur-laden shells that keep  
A fresh voice tho' the years be very gray.  
The wave that washed their lips and tuned their lay  
Is gone, gone with the faded ocean sweep,  
The royal tide, gray ebb and sunken neap  
And purple midday, — gone! To this hot clay  
Must sing my shells, where yet the primal day,  
Its roar and rhythm and splendour will not sleep.  
What hand shall join them to their proper sea  
If all be gone? Shall they forever feel  
Glories undone and worlds that cannot be? —  
"T were mercy to stamp out this agèd wrong,  
Dash them to earth and crunch them with the heel  
And make a dust of their seraphic song.

[1895]

Tho' lack of laurels and of wreaths not one  
Prove you our lives abortive, shall we yet  
Vaunt us our single aim, our hearts full set  
To win the guerdon which is never won.  
Witness, a purpose never is undone.  
And tho' fate drain our seas of violet  
To gather round our lives her wide-hung net,  
Memories of hopes that are not shall atone.  
Not wholly starless is the ill-starred life,  
Not all is night in failure, and the shield  
Sometimes well grasped, tho' shattered in the strife.  
And here while all the lowering heaven is ringed  
With our loud death-shouts echoed, on the field  
Stands forth our Nikè, proud, tho' broken-winged.

[1895]

LIVE blindly and upon the hour. The Lord,  
Who was the Future, died full long ago.  
Knowledge which is the Past is folly. Go,  
Poor child, and be not to thyself abhorred.  
Around thine earth sun-wingèd winds do blow  
And planets roll; a meteor draws his sword;  
The rainbow breaks his seven-coloured chord  
And the long strips of river-silver flow:  
Awake! Give thyself to the lovely hours.  
Drinking their lips, catch thou the dream in flight  
About their fragile hairs' aërial gold.  
Thou art divine, thou livest, — as of old  
Apollo springing naked to the light,  
And all his island shivered into flowers.

[1898]

Be still. The Hanging Gardens were a dream  
That over Persian roses flew to kiss  
The curled lashes of Semiramis.  
Troy never was, nor green Skamander stream.  
Provence and Troubadour are merest lies  
The glorious hair of Venice was a beam  
Made within Titian's eye. The sunsets seem,  
The world is very old and nothing is.  
Be still. Thou foolish thing, thou canst not wake,  
Nor thy tears wedge thy soldered lids apart,  
But patter in the darkness of thy heart.  
Thy brain is plagued. Thou art a frighted owl  
Blind with the light of life thou 'ldst not forsake,  
And Error loves and nourishes thy soul.

[1898]

## ON THE CONCERT

WHEN first this canvas felt Giorgione's hand, \*  
 From out his soul's intensity he drew 4  
 In lines most acrid yet superbly few 8  
 A man, — a soul, whose water at command 12  
 Of pain had stiffened to ice, whom grief had banned, \*  
 Till music even and harmony's rich dew 16  
 Fell fruitless. Poised, defiant and calm he threw 20  
 To the earth that wronged him his life's reprimand. \*  
 Yet, as he drew, a wind mellow with dole 24  
 Of past life as of sea-coast pine did rise 28  
 And warm the rigour of the painter's soul. 32  
 For his tear-moistened fingers warmed the frore 36  
 Hard colours of the cheek, and in the eyes 40  
 Set the large stare of Sorrow's Nevermore. 44

[1895]

THE melancholy year is dead with rain.  
Drop after drop on every branch pursues.  
From far away beyond the drizzled flues  
A twilight saddens to the window pane.  
And dimly thro' the chambers of the brain,  
From place to place and gently touching, moves  
My one and irrecoverable love's  
Dear and lost shape one other time again.  
So in the last of autumn for a day  
Summer or summer's memory returns.  
So in a mountain desolation burns  
Some rich belated flower, and with the gray  
Sick weather, in the world of rotting ferns  
From out the dreadful stones it dies away.

As a sad man, when evenings grayer grow,  
Desires his violin, and call to call  
Tunes with unhappy heart the interval;  
Then after prelude, suffering his bow,  
Along the crying strings his fingers fall  
To some persuasion born of long ago,  
While mixed in higher melodies the low  
Dull song of his life's heard no more at all:  
So with thy picture I alone devise,  
Passing on thy uncoloured face the tone  
Of memory's autumnal paradise;  
And all myself for yearning weary lies  
Fallen to but thy shadow, near upon  
The void motion of eternities.

[1808]

He said: "If in his image I was made,  
I am his equal and across the land  
We two should make our journey hand in hand  
Like brothers dignified and unafraid."  
And God that day was walking in the shade.  
To whom he said: "The world is idly planned,  
We cross each other, let us understand  
Thou who thou art, I who I am," he said.  
Darkness came down. And all that night was heard  
Tremendous clamour and the broken roar  
Of things in turmoil driven down before.  
Then silence. Morning broke, and sang a bird.  
He lay upon the earth, his bosom stirred;  
But God was seen no longer any more.

**LAKeward**



## LAKEWARD

'T WILL soon be sunrise. Down the valley waiting  
Far over slope and mountain-height the firs  
Undulate dull and furry under the beating  
Heaven of autumn stars.

To westward yet the summits hang in slumber  
Like frozen smoke; there, growing wheel on wheel,  
As 't were an upward wind of rose and amber  
Goes up the sky of steel;

And indistinguishable thro' the valley  
An endless murmur freshens as of bees,—  
The stream that gathering torrents frantically  
Churns away thro' the trees. —

Mountains, farewell! Into your crystal winter  
To linger on unworlded and alone  
And feel the glaciers of your bosom enter  
One and another my own,

And on the snow that falling edges nearer  
To lose my very shade, — 't were well, 't were done  
Had I not in me the soul of a wayfarer!  
No, let me wander down

The road that, as the boulders higher and higher  
Go narrower each to each and hold the gloom,  
Follows like me the waters' loud desire  
Of a sun-sweetened home.

And as I pass, methinks once more the Titan  
From in the bosom of the humid rocks,  
Where yet his aged eyes grow vague and whiten  
Weary and wet his locks,

Gazes away upon this brightened weather  
As asking it in reason and in rhyme  
How long shall mountain iron and ice together  
Hold against summer-time.

Long, surely! long, perhaps! but not for ever.  
Now here across the buried road and field,  
Torn from the dizzy flanks up there that quiver,  
Down to the plain and spilled

In sand and wreckage lies the avalanche's  
Dead mass under the sun, and not a sound!—  
The morning grows and from the rich pine-branches  
Shadows make blue the ground.

To wander south! Already here the grasses  
Feather and glint across the sunny air.  
It's warmer. Up the road a peasant passes  
Brown-skinned and dark of hair.

Some of an autumn glamour on the highway  
Softens the dust, and yonder I have seen  
Catching the sunlight something in the byway  
Else than an evergreen,

And weeds along the ditch are parching. — Sudden  
 Once more from either side the ranges draw  
 Near each to each; beneath struggle and madden  
 Down in the foamy flaw

The waters, and, a span across, the boulders  
 Stand to the burning heaven upright and cold.  
 Then drawing lengthily along their shoulders  
 Vapours of white and gold

Blow from the lowland upward; all the gloaming  
 Quivers with violet; here in the wedge  
 The tunnelled road goes narrow and outcoming  
 Stealthily on the edge

Lies free. The outlines have a gentle meaning.  
 Willows and clematis, foliage and grain!  
 And the last mountain falls in terraces to the greening  
 Infinite autumn plain.

O further southward, down the brooks and valley, on  
 And past the lazy farms and orchards, on!  
 It smells of hay, and thro' the long Italian  
 Flowerful afternoon.

Sodden with sunlight, green and gold, the country  
 Suspends her fruit and stretches ripe and still  
 Between the clumsy fig and silver plane-tree  
 Circled, from hill to hill

And down the vale along the running river:  
 The vale, the river and the hills, that take  
 The perfect south and here at last for ever  
 Merge into thee, O Lake! —

Sunset-enamoured in the autumnal hours!  
 When large and westering his heavy rays  
 Fall from the vineyards and the garden-flowers  
 Hazily o'er thy face,

And colouring thy bosom with a lover's  
 Warm and quick lips and hesitating hand,  
 He murmurs to thee while the twilight hovers  
 Lilac about the strand,

Thou, mid the grape-hung terraces low-levelled,  
 Lookest into the green and crimson sky  
 With swimming eyes and auburn hair dishevelled,  
 Radiant in ecstasy. —

'T is evening. In the open blueness stretches  
 A feathery lawn of light from moon to shore,  
 And a boat-load of labourers homeward plashes,  
 Singing "Amor, Amor."

**PROMETHEUS PYRPHOROS**

**[1900]**

**T O E . F .**



AT the risk of obtruding alien matter upon the reader's attention, I wish to point out that the following poem antedates by several years my own treatment of the same subject, entitled *The Fire Bringer*, the *Prometheus Pyrphoros* having first appeared in the Harvard Monthly for November, 1900. Before the publication of my poem I asked Stickney's permission to preface it with an acknowledgment of his priority in the use of the material and of my deep obligation to his work. At his urgent request such acknowledgment was omitted at that time, but is now made in order that no misconception may arise, in the mind of any reader to whom both poems may be known, regarding their relation to each other in point of pioneership. Those who are curious to examine the sources of the *Prometheus Pyrphoros* will find them in the account given by Hesiod, supplemented in some details by that of the mythographer Apollodorus.

W. V. M.

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ**

**PANDORA**

**PYRRHA**

**PROMETHEUS**

**EPIMETHEUS**

**DEUKALION**

**THE VOICES OF ZEUS**

## PROMETHEUS PYRPHOROS

SCENE. *The plain of Haimonia. In the centre, a rude stone dwelling, in the door of which stands PROMETHEUS. The voice of PANDORA always as from within. Total obscurity, nothing on the scene being distinguishable.*

DEUKALION [*crawling in*].

How dark it is, how dark and miserable!

PYRRHA. Is 't thou, Deukalion ?

DEU. Ah, thy voice! It's I.

My moment's journey seems a dreadful year.

I see nothing — Where? where? is home here?

PYR. Yes.

Thou soundest surely nearer. How —

DEU. At last.

O woman, what is this that makes us be,

Threading like worms the cavern where before —

PYR. Shows there as yet no daylight?

DEU. No, nowhere.

This dark can never lift, this heavy night

Which lies and stagnates infinitely. No,

It cannot lift, I know not when it fell;

Scarce I remember how seemed the white sunlight,

So debile is my memory and the brain

Clean hollowed out.

PYR. All round me and within

It is like pools of cold. But firewood — say,

Bring'st thou any?

DEU. Aye, but prithee to what end?  
I crawled abroad the fields there picking up  
Some herbs to eat, and fuel; but this I know,  
The tinder holds no longer any spark  
And fire is vanished irrecoverably.

PYR. Nay, try once more.

DEU. Try once again forsooth!  
I care not, for the trial's vain. Once more!  
I'll rub the sticks again together. No,  
They breed no heat.

PYR. I'll pile the firestuff — wait —  
Lest the one spark be lost.

DEU. The spark is dead,  
I say, the light has ended, and henceforth  
Misery and blackness unendurable  
Stand in the eyes that saw, the hearth that burned. —  
I draw no fire.

PYR. Where art thou? Flints, here — strike again.

DEU. So did I a thousand times and nothing leapt.  
Alas!

PYR. Ah me, how dark it is and cold.

PROMETHEUS *[aside]*.

It bursts the heart to see them suffer thus.

DEU. Strange, strange how since the fatal even-  
ing all

This mound of darkness fell. Father Prometheus  
Then cheated God and offered him in guile  
Wind-eggs and unsubstantial things: wherefor  
We people pay the wrath that never ends,

Life in the dark and obscure loneliness,—  
 Knowing nor when to sleep nor when to wake,  
 Eating what herbs we gather here, abroad  
 The plain grazed by the kine we cannot find.  
 I hear them in the dark: they toss their heads,  
 Having slept much too long, and wander on  
 And trample, or halting with outstretched neck  
 Low stubborn none knows where, far thro' the night.

[*The cattle low.*]

Hear them!

PANDORA [*singing*].

*As a poplar feels the sun's enfolding kiss,  
 And softly alone on the quiet plain  
 Yields to him all her silver trellises,  
 A ghost of green in the golden rain,  
 And trembles lightly thro' the shining air  
 Nearly unseen and melting in sky  
 Save for a shadow on the grasses there:  
 So over the earth and world am I.  
 The lips of Gods and mortals in a dream  
 Have lain on my lips of a summer night:  
 They fade like images down-stream,  
 But I have remained behind the light.  
 I give the giver more than that he sought,  
 And more than I give am I, much more:  
 As words are to an everlasting thought,  
 So less than the mother the child she bore.*

PYR. What says she?

DEU. A time ago, the God of Gods

Zeus came to adore her, and the immortal arms  
Closing about her gave her travailing.

PYR. Did he so?

DEU. Aye, like a master so he did.

PYR. She knows perchance then something, knows  
perhaps

If we're thus brutishly to suffer always and  
Forever gaze upon this frozen void.—  
Know'st thou our fate, Pandora? Tell me, mother! —  
She has not heard.

DEU. Or sorrow blocks her ears.

For ever since God approached her, on the ground,  
Her silence threaded by dull murmurs, lone  
She sits up stonelike 'gainst the rude house-wall.  
On hand and knee some while ago I crawled  
Up to her, and, saying our heavy troubles, passed  
Over her cool immobile face my hand;  
I kissed her eyes, I touched and held her chin:  
But all that while she said nothing to me,  
Remaining passive, silent, pitiless,  
Albeit her eyes were very wide awake.

PYR. The pensive cannot sleep.

DEU. O misery,

Would that I were asleep a long long time,  
Beyond to-morrow and the summer's end!  
Nay, sometimes down my dark bewildered brain  
Stumble fantastic hopes that — like the birds  
I've found afield dismembered and undone,  
Like beasts that shut their swimming eyes, and leaves

That eddy dizzily down the nervous wind —  
So we may fail and fall, be swept away  
From what we are.

PYR.

I too, Deukalion.

Labour at last is shame within the soul.  
Have I not faithfully day after day  
Uptorn the crusty earth and smashed the clots,  
Scattering with thee the everlasting seeds?  
Have I not homeward carried every day  
Upon my head pitchers of spring-water  
And packs of straw for bedding; and arranged  
This place we live in cleanly and cheeringly?  
Yes, here have I within thy warm embrace  
Season on season, long with agony,  
My brain sunstricken and my body sick  
With travelling the dreadful acres, borne  
Daughters and sons and sons and daughters; whom  
At midnight then, against their crying, alone  
I rocked in my exhausted arms, I suckled  
And bending watched, till, as between my brows  
It hammered thuds of slumber, very late  
A little thin gray morning thro' the chinks  
Told the disaster of another day.  
And I have reared them and pitifully taught them,  
My hand upon their hair, my broken truths,—  
So laboured in their welfare! and in pain  
So scourged their weakness! Woe is me, alas!  
They never gave me thanks, no, nor so much  
As looked a little in my hungry eyes.

Rather, against the time of strength, rebellious  
 They fret their freedom out, and last of all  
 Abandoning me for another world  
 Go down the sunset, being seen no more.

DEU. Yes, over fields we sowed they went away,  
 Trampling our harvest down. And here we lie  
 All hedged in with hoar and darkness, old  
 For staring on the sodden vacancy.  
 I would I knew what thing is in my heart  
 To stamp away so hardly! but for it,  
 I'm that much tired and aching-desolate  
 I'd pass away in earth.

PRO. *[aside]*. How horrible  
 Is now become their life!

PYR. It wearies me  
 To think of further being, against the time  
 Not yet bygone. For then it needs must be  
 My breasts will shrivel up, my faded flesh  
 Starve on the joints, and all the bloom I was,  
 The rose and perfume of their pleasure, shrink  
 Into a thing of shame.

DEU. Beyond recall  
 The labour of our lives now desiccates.  
 Our sweat was poured for nothing; we have bled  
 Wounded with ignorance in such a task  
 As irks one in the very memory of 't.

PRO. *[coming forward]*.  
 Then let us now remember nothing more,  
 But blindly hope in spite of all. And I

Who once defied the Gods, again to-day  
Stand and demand our dignities of them.  
We will not suffer thus, we will not go  
Darkly and despicably tumbling down  
The road of life. For we be something more;  
Nor quite in vain infinite earth obeys  
The plough we fashioned. All indeed is ours!  
We are the crown of nature and her lord.

DEU. O hold thy peace, desperate man! The Gods,  
Thy littleness to show, have now been pleased  
To take, for matter of their anger, us  
Who serviceably did our common task.  
Thou pil'st our suffering up. What is thy heart  
To bring curse after curse upon thy children, all  
For idle show in the face of destiny?

PRO. 'T is time we stood up as before, and looked,  
Brushing the meshes from our forehead, forth  
Upon the sunshine and the rolling corn.

DEU. To bring upon this woman and me, upon  
All generations, vanity and a life  
Fatal and stupid as the stones.

PYR. O father mine,  
I nothing say who love thee evermore.  
Give us the light and life, give us the hope,

That we may never question but abide  
 Unthinkingly by what is set before.  
 Lay thy two hands upon my brow, and smile  
 Tho' the night hide thy sweetness. Say the word,  
 Give us the promise. We believe thy strength.  
 For see, we suffer and so scarcely endure  
 That nothingness were better far, and ev'n  
 The being unborn a wholly happy thing.

PRO. Yes, woman, word and promise hold: I  
 swear 't

By me and thee who bearest in the world  
 The sweeter burden and the sharper pain.  
 This night is not fore'er nor long, and soon  
 Between the cliffs of darkness issuing shall  
 The day its thousand arrows pour abroad  
 Here where we lived — and shall in other years  
 Live and increase, our children's children, on  
 To generations jealous as the Gods.  
 This will I do, and if they stood in rank,  
 Yet will I storm them, winning back the fire  
 And scattering the hope that cannot die.

DEU. What misery will be ours!

PYR. Speak to the end.

'T is sweet to dream on what not yet has been.

PRO. 'T were sure a shame to grovel at the doors  
 And ask a pittance, when the Lord is I.

DEU. Necessity!

PRO. We change and pass away,  
 But so in changing have some mastery, we

Revolving make progression, we endure  
 In virtue of desire and hope dissatisfied,  
 And, thro' disaster struggling, at the last  
 Fetch in salvation and the human end.  
 This for now! nay, only a little space  
 Of twilight is before, a dubious interval  
 After the night, this side of day, as tho'  
 We stood upon the threshold momently  
 Where morning meets with evening passing by.  
 Therefore in tears no longer dreaming, now  
 Turn, tho' your hearts be broken, turn your eyes  
 Dayward, and quelling all lament with hope  
 Wait for my coming homeward. I declare  
 I will go bring the sunlight in my hands  
 Back from God's citadel and home to us.

[*He goes away.*]

PAN. [*singing*].

*Before my eyes they come and go ;  
 The shadows on my dreaming face  
 Move to and fro,  
 Yet I look further over larger ways.  
 For pity is not of that nor this,  
 And kindness stretches out her arm  
 On all that is,  
 To keep the grass-blade and the star from harm.  
 She kisses every dying wave  
 Into the sweetness of her trust,  
 And stoops to save  
 The bird that sank from heaven into dust. —*

*The battle hurls long and loud  
 Between the mountains and the sea ;  
 The yellow cloud  
 Crashes the woods in sunder tree by tree,  
 And struggling over land and main  
 The generations masterful  
 With greed and pain  
 Scatter upon the turf a brother's skull :  
 I walk the places where they drove  
 And sing my song where all is cursed.  
 Then, for my love,  
 The child will play again, the flower burst.*

DEU. What a strange mournful voice is hers!

PYR. No, no ! I feel a happiness bringing  
 leaves

Upon the branches, and the night is less  
 Between now and to-morrow ! Oh, to-morrow —

DEU. Thine, woman, is a silly heart, and trust  
 Is in thy being like a malady.

Father Prometheus, greatest of us all,  
 Avails not with his majestic arrogance  
 To wrench from God the blessing he denies.

And we be cursed ! I know not wherefore, no,  
 I cannot say what mischief, thine or mine,  
 Merited punishment : but we be cursed  
 Beyond our father's valour to revoke, —  
 And I believe, to pay his awful deed,  
 He will hang out in anguish crucified  
 Upon the giddy ramparts of the world

While we mysteriously damned shall hide  
Here at night's bottom to the last of time.

EPIMETHEUS. Deukalion!

DEU. Here, father, this way home.

EPI. Deukalion!

DEU. Here, here! Thou seekest us?  
What is 't?

EPI. I've journeyed hopeless and too long,  
Nothing before but darkness and behind  
This endless shadow of my memory.

PYR. Poor heart! thou lovest overmuch the past.  
But happiness is toward, the night will end.

DEU. Heed her not, Epimetheus! Thy brother  
Has spoiled her brain with promises and words.

EPI. Where is he?

DEU. Come to fetch the fire again,  
To kindle back the world to what it was.

EPI. The fool! He struggles forward evermore,  
Like one who stumbles; but the sadder thought  
Never constrains him, that futurity  
Is dead with phantoms of the things bygone,—

DEU. Aye, and alive with sufferings that are.  
He's wild and rolls like whirlwind up a steep,  
Leaving but ruin.

EPI. When I consider time,  
Remembering all my pastimes and the haunts  
Where clustered flowers erewhile that one by one  
Shone either side the path of what I was,  
My bosom fills more than to hold with pain,

And yearning, like a swallow in the void,  
Strains aching, dropping down, down endlessly.

PYR. Come nearer that I rest thee in my arms.

PAN. [singing].

*Many who have only dreamed of me  
Have grown unhappy and lost their years.  
They gather the daisies thoughtfully,  
Then throw them away and burst in tears.  
Their eyes are filled — for they looked so long —  
With the sunset-light of my aureole ;  
Their lips will quiver to utter song,  
And the spring lies swelling under their soul.  
For their hand in a woman's hand is laid  
And between a woman's breasts their brow.  
For a while they feel no longer afraid  
With the sky above and the earth below :  
But never the whole and the fulness come.  
Their eyes are blind with another light.  
They walk through echoes and have no home,  
Like shadows waving upon the night.*

EPI. Pandora's voice.

PYR. Obscure and pitiful.

DEU. What sawest thou on thy travel ?

EPI. No daylight.

Nor anything on before; but at my back  
Remembrance made a weary song, chanting  
The mellow seasons that have gone away.

DEU. And bringest nothing ?

EPI. No.

DEU.

How profitless,

Thou and thy brother, elders tho' ye be,  
 Worry the time out and defeat yourselves.  
 One storms gigantic up the heavens; thou  
 Triest to die with thine own memory.

PYR. Leave him, Deukalion, for he is so sad.

DEU. Aye, 't is we suffer their temerities,  
 And back and forth, to ends we know not of,  
 Madden between to-morrow and yesterday.

PYR. Father, be comforted! And if it please thee,  
 According to thy fancy, nothing forced,  
 Sing us meanwhile a rune here in the night.  
 For song is very like a summer fern  
 Sweeter for dark; and we sad winter birds  
 Will dream a little while more pleasantly.

EPI. [chanting].

*The noise in the eternal heart abates.  
 The valley of the world is blotted out,  
 And either end the boulders on the gates  
 Are pushed across and shut.  
 The mountains in the dark are growing small.  
 No wind is any more upon the lea.  
 The stone has frittered from the waterfall  
 Down rivers to the sea.  
 The uttermost is swelling out in void,  
 In total night, more cold and emptier  
 Around the ghost of that which is destroyed,  
 The breath of things that were.*

[A long silence.]

PYR. Hush, for I hear him.

DEU. Say!

PYR. Prometheus

Is coming. All thro' my blood the pulses knock,  
I see the flames — they crackle.

DEU. Her brain is wild.

EPI. I feel like echoes of the lost daylight —

PYR. He comes, he comes. Nay, look how fast the  
light

Rolls gaining on the dark and urges back  
Like windy boulders of obscurity.

His step! I hear him, I see him — Prometheus!

PRO. [shouting from far].

This torch will light our lives. Rejoice! up, up!  
I say we have the sunlight back again.

DEU. How sharp a dazzle races the empty air!  
I see nothing.

EPI. It reddens in my two eyes,  
My brain is needled thro' with pain.

PRO. [rushing in with a torch, lights the pyre].  
Rejoice,

The lost is won! Our dignities once more  
Resume their proper thrones, and we are men.

PYR. Thy forehead shines like morning! on thy neck  
I lay my arms — but the light kills —

PRO. No, come  
And gladden! Logs here and pitch and all that burns,  
That kindles, flames. Bring, pile it high as heaven,  
Along like rivers and across like fields!

'T has dawned at last, such dawn as ne'er before  
 Tore the wide sky. From out bottomless chasms  
 Fountains jet glittering up into the sky  
 And hailstone sparks descend, tumbling like sand  
 Over the mountains swollen in conflagration.

DEU. Stay, father, hear me!

PRO. I have it from the Gods.

Aye, from the hearthstone of the Gods I caught  
 This fire and hope and knowledge won to us —  
 My torch be brandished in the face of Zeus!

EPI. Brother, be softer in triumph or we die.

PRO. Still was it night, thick night, when I at the  
 base

Of their enormous mountain stood, around me  
 A blacker gloom, foliage and bearded firs,  
 All of a forest's heaviness: thro' which  
 Down from the summit wanderingly quired  
 Amazing echoes of a festival,  
 Of instruments and choral song. Below  
 Sounded, like vast itinerant herds afield  
 Under the night, the torrents rumbling on.  
 There I began. Sheer up the night, alone  
 And without fear, catching ahold of pines  
 To swing me higher or stay me from recoil,  
 I climbed. Beneath my trample brushwood crashed  
 In the spongy soil, and snapped the twigs short-off.  
 Behind, dislodged, stone after stone bounded  
 Down thumping to the depths. But straightaway  
 I groped thro' snarls of ragged boughs that scratched

My visage blind, and tore the weedy shrubs  
Which like fine cordage knotted my feet back:  
So floundered up the dumb dead humid night.  
Soon thinned the forestry. From tree to tree  
Espaced, the ground lay tamer, — moss and herbs,  
A softness underfoot. Then, not a pine,  
But blind and weary slopes of shale that passed  
Upward in the deserted gloom. I gasped —  
'T was icy still and thin, and very sweet  
With unseen flowers, the last of earthly things  
Carelessly blooming in immensity,  
Where still I mounted like an arrow shot  
Up with revenge and scorn to the midnight clouds.  
Sudden the windier air froze and my feet  
Crunched snow which even in such a dark as was  
Shone bluely with a smothered light away  
To the summit. At my throat I felt the void;  
It stung my sweated face. I stamped the crust,  
And step by step ascending wilfully  
Laddered the cold up skyward to the end.  
Just then that music, which half heard before  
And undistinguished down the steeps unfurled,  
Struck quicker rhythm; and looking up I saw  
Mid draperies of darkness hanging vague  
A halo shining downwards, in the ice  
Mirrored like vapour mazed with meteors.  
In a last hurry I climbed. The freezing dark  
Was all a tremor of song, and finally  
A dim design of snowy mansion grew

Ghostly and lucid, carved of summer cloud,  
A white flame tapering at the core of space.  
And then methought the appalling night and gloom  
Drew like an ocean's ebb sinkingly down,  
I swimming out. The floor lay luminous,  
As when by pale gray weather and no wind  
A glossy lake at morning falls asleep:  
Whence grading to the citadel for steps  
An hundred plinths of crystal led. They cut  
The mild light slant along their silver edge,  
Describing circles and diminishing  
Toward certain columns roundly poised atop. ↴  
Up to that place of supreme glory, I  
Man of the niggard earth and god at heart  
Mounted out of disaster to my place.  
It seemed daylight growing and diffused,  
Splendid, melodious, and of such perfume  
As warms upon a meadow at afternoon  
Of cloudless summer; and another light,  
Neither of sun nor moon, awaked the air  
To radiance wreathing on the point of all.  
This was his palace, vastly and circular,  
Builded of lucent marble, with a film  
Hung in its height, erratic, shadowing-in  
Unlikely plants and wondrous ocean-flowers.  
And placed about stood pillars very firm,  
Where top to bottom slender flutings ran;  
And around every pillar drew a belt  
Mid-high, that brake the rods of light in twain;

And there, clamped in a sconce of gold each one  
 And cinct with silver snakes, the torches burned  
 Upholding flames of the everlasting fire,  
 The sacred fire that having once been ours  
 He stole again who names his own self God.

EPI. Alas! thy scorn will drag his vengeance down.

PRO. Peace, man! He wronged me, and the day is  
 mine.

One of those torches is this in my hand.  
 It flamed to right where the entrance is, two bright  
 Iron-swung sheets of brass, firm-barred across  
 And bolted 'gainst the fearful universe:  
 While inside cried aloud perennial choirs  
 To a single note so puissant and superb  
 It seemed an ocean singing to the sun.  
 I heard, and seized the torch. In challenge too  
 Wrenching the clasp, I hurled it formless down  
 Before their gates and turned my feet away.

[*It thunders.*]

PYR. Father, be calm.

DEU. O desolation and despair!

Thou, wretched man, shalt be our ruin.

PYR.

Hush!

The winds are up —

EPI.

It had to be —

PYR.

Like streams

Swirling before they burst.

DEU.

A thunder-cloud

Unravels down out of the burning sky.

PRO. I say, whate'er's achieved, once and for all  
 Stands in defiance, and we at Nature's heart  
 Register signs of our nobility.  
 This is the symbol I have had my will,  
 Which down the crystal stairs into the depth  
 I bore, a little flame thro' darkness, won  
 From summits which henceforth are counted ours.  
 With it I've lit the world.—Look forth, my chil-  
 dren!

All the unfolded earth, mountain and vale  
 Holding their fruits aloft, the knotty crags  
 Scattering colour, and the prairies green  
 With tuft and billow of infinite grass:  
 Of all their life your life is nourishèd.  
 Follow the rivers further to the sea  
 And launch your enterprise! The wilful soul  
 Goes forward to possess, and vindicates  
 From strength to strength the majesty of life.

EPI. Alas!

Nothing will teach thee infelicity.  
 The sunrise is not all: who shall forget  
 For stubbornness or greed the yesterdays  
 Which rivet us to the soil we come of? See,  
 The woman weeps.

PYR. [to PROMETHEUS]. I'll follow on — heed not  
 him —

Despite exhaustion for the hope —

EPI. What says she?

The hope?

PRO. More of truth than e'er thou knew'st.

DEU. Oh, this it is that whets the rusty scythe!  
 And notwithstanding certainly we believe  
 It nothing profits so throughout the year  
 To strain, yet strain all the year thro' we must,  
 And for a hope! Thou mad'st it so! The worm  
 Which bores the parchèd glebe is happier,  
 The goaded oxen plodding for a bread  
 Not theirs, more calm — thou mad'st it so! A curse  
 Upon thee! May thy tortures pay our own,  
 Our stupid agonies that in the daylight now  
 Begin afresh! — I will not struggle more.

PRO. He whines. A pity 't is the world consists  
 Of such: who using nature and themselves,  
 Suffer their task and clog with lamentation  
 The rush and furtherance of human things.  
 For hope, being had, suffices; in so much  
 We prosper, and the Gods are idle dreams  
 Strung in the void of our uncertain thoughts.

*[It thunders.]*

EPI. Another day has been.

DEU. Thunder again!

The eternal reason will be justified,  
 And truth descends against the haughty brain.

PYR. How 't darkens!

PRO. *[soliloquising].* She too loses heart. At last,  
 Whatever be done of large and generous,  
 Howe'er one's life be given, and freely all  
 Delight, affection, quiet sacrificed

For something bolder to the good of man,—  
Yet at the last he will prefer disgrace  
And hug his slavery, leaving him that strove  
To fight damnation and despair alone.

PYR. Ah me, the daylight vanishes in death.

*[A cloud gradually falls through the scene, and  
all fades in gray obscurity.]*

PAN. *[singing].*

*As an immortal nightingale  
I sing behind the summer sky  
Thro' leaves of starlight gold and pale  
That shiver with my melody,  
Along the wake of the full-moon  
Far on to oceans, and beyond  
Where the horizons vanish down  
In darkness clear as diamond.*

EPI. On wings of memory the night returns.  
The great bird gires before he drop again.—  
Sunlight and country that I knew! O sky!  
Ye furl yourselves and wander shadowily  
Into the endless backward of the heart.

PYR. It blows and darkens in. Where is he?

*[It thunders.]*

THE VOICES OF ZEUS. Man, come with us, come  
with us, come away!

PRO. *[aside].*

His voice!

THE VOICES. Come to receive thy certain pain.

PRO. Justice of God, malignant destiny,  
 Delirious curse! how it confounds the brain  
 To see thee blast our strength, and day by day  
 With all thy crooked fingers here rip up  
 The patient fabric of our energy.

Over the endless harvest, o'er the home  
 We builded with great pain, for pastime thou  
 Spill'st putrefaction, and upon thy palm  
 The world shakes like an egg, to shut and crush.

THE VOICES. Be ready, for the time is Now! We've  
 come

To lead thee to the edge of wilderness.

PRO. We'll die in battle. Come near.

THE VOICES. Thou canst not die.  
 'T is thine to struggle everlasting.

Look o'er the world, unhappy wretch, and come!

PAN. [singing].

*My dew is everywhere  
 Where things are ;  
 I fall and flutter and fare,  
 Leaving a star  
 By the roads of earth, in the jar  
 Paths of the air.*

*Mine is the milk to charm  
 In a mother's breast,  
 Sweet with her pain and warm  
 With her rest,  
 The life that asks for a nest  
 In her arm ;*

*And mine is the violet  
That so lies  
In the evening of her wet  
Sorrowful eyes.  
For another thing may rise,  
But her youth has set.*

*Nothing is less with me,  
Nothing is lost.  
For I smile on the earth and sea,  
On the infinite host  
Of the dead and the living, and most  
On the yet-to-be.*

PRO. Pandora, how thou singest o'er my pain  
Yet of my humiliation nothing! Ah,  
Farewell, and let thy voice for evermore  
Sweeten the dreary acres of mankind.

THE VOICES. The day is at an end.

PRO. But not my deed!  
The light is theirs and I the giver thereof,  
Long as blood beats within the human heart.—  
Unhand me! Ah!

THE VOICES. Wear now thy chains.

PYR.. Who is 't that chains? Where is he now?

PRO. Alone,  
Beyond thy arms, in other hands than thine.

THE VOICES. Drag him on! for he balks the will of  
God.

PRO. Yet does my work outstrip the penalty.

Nothing may die or live infructuous,  
And I'm immortal: for I join with Being,  
And nothing in the universal sphere  
But is.

'T was with me for a while as with the sun  
Upon the ocean: writing out in gold  
The moving characters of highest day,  
Which to dull creatures of the depth appeared  
Fantastic and divine and possible.

THE VOICES. Drag him away! The stubborn mind  
has burst.

PRO. Many times I have died and yet shall die.  
For Nature rolls on, while across the chasms  
From hill to hill and round from east to west  
Voices pass on the echo to the stars.  
So forms are laid aside, and if I lived,  
I was the cresting of the tide wherein  
An endless motion rose exemplified.

THE VOICES. Bear him away, for evening falleth in.

[*The cloud lifts, PROMETHEUS has disappeared.*

*A great sunset fills the scene.]*

PAN. [singing].

*My soul of sunset every human day  
In long sad colours on the evening dwells  
And gives her solemn violet away  
Over the quiet endlessness of hills.*

*Mild and gold burns from cloud to cloud, above  
The obscurer fields, my pity for an hour :*

*And then life goes to sleep within my love,  
The world is drawn together as a flower.*

*Labour at last within the soul is peace,  
And faithful pain after a certain while  
Like other things will strengthen and increase  
And colour at the last into a smile. —*

*Rest in my bosom till thy day be due,  
Until my day be finished at sunrise,  
And I behold thee glittering thro' the blue  
And playing in the sunset of my eyes.*

EPI. The sunset comes to die now as of yore, —  
The sad recurrence of remembered things.

PYR. He's gone to suffer, gone whither? Alas!  
Would I knew where his bleeding head will lie  
To give my breast for pillow and avert  
The dreadful vengeance feeding on his soul! —  
How crimsonly the day declines! Come sleep,  
Deukalion, for to-morrow brings again  
The sun he gave us, and the hope — the life.



II

**FRAGMENTS OF A DRAMA ON THE  
LIFE OF THE EMPEROR JULIAN**



[This splendid fragment was begun in the first half of the year 1901. STICKNEY was then unable, however, to give it the time and attention required for its completion, and though he subsequently returned to it with unabated interest, it was, unhappily, never finished. STICKNEY had planned to treat the life of Julian in two dramas, a shorter one, of which the following pages are a part, dealing with the period before his election to the throne, and one on a much larger scale, beginning with his coronation at Paris and ending with his death at Maronga. Of this drama nothing remains but an extremely brief synopsis.]

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ**

**CONSTANCE: THE KING**  
**EUSEBIA: THE QUEEN**  
**HELENA: HIS SISTER**  
**JULIAN: HIS COUSIN**  
**EUSEBIUS: LORD CHAMBERLAIN**  
**ARBETIO**  
**REMIGIUS**  
**MERCURIUS**  
**APODEMIUS**

**SCENE: *Milan, Como, Milan.***

ACT I

*The Privy Council hall in the Palace at Milan*

EUSEBIUS

REMIGIUS

ARBETIO

MERCURIUS

EUSEBIUS. Have you the news of 't?

ARBETIO. Rumours, nothing more.

EUS. And yet by this the Fury should be dead.

They had him.

MERCURIUS. Oh, had him! perhaps! but well we  
know,

While yet th' imperial prisoner, hither bound,  
At Adrianople tarried, now and again  
A soldier, privy officer, detached  
From garrisons then wintered thereabouts,  
Down the palatial corridors or plain  
At the high gate with pleas of business still  
Admittance to the Cæsar asked. They say  
None saw him, but —

ARB. None. I have 't too certainly  
That we should vex our comfort and belief  
With your amused suspicions.

MER. Often, Sir,  
You're well informed, and oft again too well.  
EUS. I judge Arbetio right. A costly risk  
To slip a criminal so superb! Let be,  
For newer things press for attention.

This monster dead, as out of doubt I say  
 He will be or is, one, only one remains  
 Of the imperial race, this man's half-brother  
 And cousin to King Constance, Julian.  
 I make no question (as having darkly, yet  
 In words sufficient, touched upon this theme  
 Amongst us all and certain other few  
 You know of) hereupon the agreement stands:  
 That he we speak of, newly here arrived  
 By order, Julian —

MER. Tush! Some one comes.

[Enter SERVANT.]

SERVANT. One Apodemius in the Courtyard waits  
 His Majesty's good pleasure.

EUS. Looks he glad?

SER. Dead with his haste and journey, yet withal  
 A bearer of good news, your Lordship.

EUS. Let Apodemius appear — or no!  
 You'll wait an order. [Exit SERVANT.]

Caesar 's dead. If then  
 Occasion come to push our scheme, the road  
 In general direction cleared, it needs  
 No further counsel to begin, excepting  
 What special case the future bring to note.  
 We have our cues.

[Preceded by guards, the KING and QUEEN enter and  
 take their seats.]

KING. We give you all good morrow.  
 Has news arrived from Pola?

EUS. Please you, one  
Waits your good order, Apodemius.  
KING. Waits? How is this?  
EUS. This minute just announced.  
KING. Order him 'fore us. Quick!  
[EUSEBIUS calls in SERVANT, who goes to fetch  
APODEMIUS.]  
You counsellors,  
In such a matter, when the Roman realm  
Shudders in earthquake, play a peevish rôle.  
Where is this man? It seems we wait! It seems—  
[APODEMIUS enters. The guards meanwhile are dis-  
missed.]

Tell him, Eusebius, he may speak to us.  
APODEMIUS. His Majesty's obeyed, the tyrant dead:  
Yet in the extreme of haste so to outstrip  
All speed of rumour and uncertain noise,  
That first the fact this Royal Highness first  
Might fully hold, I not an instant hung  
With pen or style my duties to detail,  
But straight on the issue, seen participant,  
Springing to horse and spurring, here I am  
Without a brief and only fit to speak.  
Will 't please his Majesty —

KING. He has our ear.  
APO. I pass how, to our order prompt, we re  
Barbatio and I, hence from Milan  
The long and wintry way hot-speed across  
Venetia's windy plane-land by Trieste

And, rounding Caraganca, east and north.  
On the ninth day, sunset, we did dismount  
At the inn appointed at Petovio  
And straight were ushered 'fore his Majesty's  
High cousin Gallus, Cæsar of th' Orient.  
Whom first we reassured, then hand to hand —  
He tame but twitching, and with sloven eyes  
But soft, suspicious, timid, dangerous —  
We stripped his regal robes and changing clapped  
A soldier's shirt and cloak upon him. "Quick up!"  
Barbatio said to the man, and in his eyes  
Two sparks grew big and died. Then all of us  
With Leontius, Lucillian, Scudilo  
(The last at the whip), in public waggon drove.  
'T was bitter dark. That night and all the day,  
Served by relays and weather, rattling past  
Celeja and Emona, late we made  
Nauportus; and a carcass to the floor  
Could have no dull-or-deader slumped than I.  
I slept the matter of a night-watch, then  
Sat upright, cold awake, a crazy scream  
Fresh in my ear. I crept to Cæsar's door:  
Which drawn ajar, I heard about his chamber  
The man astir and shuffling, short of breath,  
Who in delirium poorly blurted out  
Pieces of names and words,  
Awful entreaties to a swarm of ghosts  
That steeply wading up the dark, said he,  
Uncoiled their arms at him. A moment then

Cut by a gasp — their fingers had his throat —  
 And suddenly over down he fell to ground.  
 From embers twinkling on the foreroom hearth  
 I lit a lamp —

KING.                   O finish, Sir! be quick.  
 He was a — Briefer much! I say, be much,  
 Much briefer. Ho, proceed.

APO.                   The morrow come —

KING [*stamping on the ground*].  
 Proceed, I said. You hear me. Eusebius,  
 Tell this impossible man to say his tale.

MER. [*aside*].  
 He's very troubled.

APO.                   Crossed the chamber where  
 Snoring upon their straw my fellows lay,  
 The door then pushing aside which forward sucked  
 My wretched flame, I entered. On the floor  
 He sprawled and opened up to mine  
 Unspeakable bad eyes, his flaxen beard  
 Red with a gash in falling, and his breath  
 From hollow nostrils hanging white and full  
 In the black cold. He staggered on my arm  
 Back fainting to the truckle-bed. Next day  
 Close on sunrise we rounded by Trieste  
 For Pola, slackening to the common pace,  
 For he was sick. There on the second morn  
 Arraigned before ourselves 't was asked of him,  
 In th' Emperor's name and ceremonious, why  
 All thro' the Roman East and Antioch, why

With such a thrifty hand he countersigned  
 That world of deaths. Whereat his visage grew  
 Gray-white and glazen; dizzy to a chair  
 He sank and, near distorted with dry sobs,  
 Blubbered the name of Constantina, his wife,  
 Who'd pricked him on. Barbatio then pronounced  
 Death on him. That moment in our council-hall  
 Especially despatched Serenian came  
 To urge the royal haste. We seized the caitiff,  
 Strapping his hands behind him; flung him down  
 Dead-faint with terror, an unfeeling mass  
 Lying outstretched, and 'headed him. — I saw,  
 And mounting spurred away: in proof whereof  
 Down at the kingly feet I cast his shoes  
 Of which the purple heels a thousand lives  
 Ground into anguish.

KING [*after a pause and slowly*].

Dead! Gallus is dead;  
 Our subjects and our kingdom and ourselves  
 Are rid — [*eyeing APODEMIUS and aside*] he's surely  
 speaking truth — are rid  
 Of one we nurtured, loved, and lifted up  
 Beside us: but th' imperial mind and blood  
 In him grew cancerous, and inch by inch,  
 Even as I feared of him, of others, of — [A pause.]  
 [To APODEMIUS.] We thank our servants well; a re-  
 compense  
 Remigius from our private fund will pay,  
 An hundred aurei. [APODEMIUS and REMIGIUS *exeunt*.]

ARB. [*aside*]. H'm! Conscience-money!

MER. [*to ARBETIO*].

You say?

ARB. [*to MERCURIUS carefully*].

It might, I say, Sir, have been less.

EUS. If one so private as a servant speak,  
This riddance falls a miracle, done to all  
By your own Majesty's most reverent self.  
More shrewdly planned, more wise in every point  
No measure e'er was took, and managed so  
Direct from the Imperial Throne, amid  
What trouble, care, anxiety!

MER.

Indeed

A friend in office, who like none other knows  
That Syrian region where this hydra raged,  
Writes how the gladness lighting every face  
Blazons you forth in hymns.

EUS. And nearly now  
Your sacred throne in undisturbed repose —

[*A pause.*]

KING. Ah, nearly!

EUS. Nearly! Would the truth were quite.

QUEEN. Your drift, your meaning, my Lord Cham-  
berlain?

EUS. Not without counsel 'fore your Majesties  
I broach a thing yourselves and (God knows) we  
Distressed consider. Nothing now were said  
And my mistaken thought forgot and gone,  
But that a question haply put, a word

Here dropped and there, a gesture, showed,  
 Alas! not only I, but others, nay  
 Many the same in secret had revolved.  
 I mean the dead man's brother, Julian.

KING. And — what of him ?

EUS. What say you, Arbetio ?

ARB. A studious man.

MER. If only studious !

For study then he left Macellum ?

KING. Left ?

EUS. This I'd not heard.

MER. Your Majesties remember  
 By their good pleasure certain years ago  
 These cousins, then but youths, both were removed  
 To Cappadocia. There with retinue,  
 Tutors and priests and whatsoever goes  
 For princely education, they abode  
 In the imperial palace at Macellum,  
 Free surely, but too young, no doubt too young  
 To roam at pleasure and — enough ! —

QUEEN. My Lord,  
 Think you in private here this matter needs  
 A language so obscure ?

MER. Believe me, I mean —  
 [To the KING.] Well, in religion did your Majesty's  
 Blest father Constantine, and, following him,  
 Did not your sacred self edict and write  
 Yourselves and all the imperial realm of Rome  
 Christians, followers of the crucified ?

In the which spirit these cousins of your blood  
With care were tutored. Certain still it is  
Incognito this very Julian,  
Seen in Nicomedea, heard and loved  
The pagan Greeks; nor only churches there,  
But elsewhere temples oft he visited  
With friends, with many friends.

EUS. A virtue this  
That nature richly gave him. A mere boy,  
He wore misfortune prettily, as tho'  
Knowing the popular heart; and walked abroad  
With modest ways. But mine is harder news.  
When the man Gallus, treasonable and  
A prisoner by the common judgment damned,  
Still unsuspecting here from Syria  
Journeyed upon these summons, and awhile  
Within Constantinople played the King,  
This brother of his there met, conferred with him —  
KING. Where had you this?

EUS. Your Majesty —  
KING. Where had you this?  
Around my throne I feel a sea of snakes  
Rocking their heads, and struck I each new day  
A score of them, the tide still hisses in  
Snapping its poisoned whips. To keep alive  
And steer this kingdom forward into time,  
It needs a thousand eyes, and in the skull  
Brains like an ant-hill. So then Julian  
Talked with this madman and, you say, conspired —

EUS. Conferred —

KING. And Gallus came — he surely knew 't —  
To answer justice.

EUS. Oh, very like, altho'  
It appears he knew not.

KING. I know a thousand things:  
Rancorous memories, present ills and fears,  
And wicked calculations yet to be,  
They talked of, whispering, this tricky pair.

MER. They're now no more a pair, your Majesty.

QUEEN [*to EUSEBIUS*].  
"T was in Constantinople — how long ago  
Say you, my Lord, this happened?

EUS. Of the day,  
Tho' my report in nothing specifies,  
"T were easy reckoning — if 't be true or false.  
QUEEN. I'd somehow thought the prince about those  
days

Half way to Milan here.

ARB. Indeed.

QUEEN. My Liege,  
Rather than hang in this uneasy thought  
And catch suspicion, say, we heard the man  
Here now himself —

KING. Not now.

QUEEN. For ne'er as yet  
Yourself have seen him; scarcely at court have we  
Noticed his figure, consecrate it seems  
To dusty books and dead philosophies.

From his apartments, neighbour tho' he be,  
 He goes abroad affrighted, gloomy, shy,  
 And blinking in the royal light. A word  
 Might lure him to us, or at least disclose  
 His deeper thought.

KING. Not now, not here.

QUEEN. Methinks

It ill befits our Selves and ministers  
 To make gossip of justice; and yourself  
 Are in this thing distinguished that you dealt  
 Only the large inevitable Fate.

KING. As far as in us lies.

QUEEN. In whom lies all,  
 Whom all regards, of whom does all depend.

KING. And so, alas, we were eternity.

QUEEN. Now worthily yourself — as one who sees  
 The heart of things — a moment here admit  
 This man before you. Maybe he's a thing  
 Unfit your use: well, then away with him.  
 Your purpose lies across the world too swift  
 For mean distinction: so, away with him.  
 But if he've stuff to serve, obey you and  
 Receive your orders, here a moment lost  
 Is wisdom, justice, prudence and yourself.

KING. Arbetio, here, approach us.

EUS. [to MERCURIUS aside]. The — the Queen  
 About this thing behaves a shade — what say you?

MER. 'T is said she pities him; and then, and then  
 A woman, childless, young — but not in youth.

EUS. You knew her fancy?

MER. I? And you?

KING [*to ARBETIO*]. And say

We ask our cousin here before us, on

A matter of high concern. [*Exit ARBETIO*.]

EUS. Your Majesty

No doubt in this is well-advised; we pray

That somehow rumour wrongs him, and somehow

He will assure us, being a different man

Than was his fearful brother.

QUEEN. Step-brothers

Are oft alike in name, nay, brothers even!

Yet in our cousin 't is not himself, the man,

Concerns us, but the manner of his use.

For were he, as 't appears, a student merely,

To us he goes for nothing; and therefor

We see him, to choose amongst his qualities.

MER. Your Highnesses alone

Can judge their servants, or if any such

They wish. Nay, for the matter of his faith

He might indeed be pagan, might as 't were

Repudiate th' imperial creed —

KING. Is this

So certain?

MER. Your Majesty mistakes; I say:

He might so be, yet none the less subserve

The public interest. Further, if 't be true

As 't is reported, he in private held

With the dead criminal his brother, why,

It matters less, much less it matters than

[Enter ARBETIO and JULIAN.]

When Gallus was alive.

JULIAN [aside]. *Was* — said he was ?

To sting me. Four, five vultures! Many behind  
Fly croaking up. Beware! It's full of eyes.

[To the KING.] Your Majesty has been pleased — your —

[*As he bows at the throne he sees the Cæsar's  
shoes.*]

Pardon me —

Is — is he dead ?

[*Looks at ARBETIO, who gives a sign of assent;  
guards are just visible at the door.*]

KING. My cousin Julian,  
We have summoned you to learn —

JUL. [aside]. My hour is come!  
KING. First how the Cæsar Gallus, time ago  
Complained of and accused day after day  
In Syria, Palestine, in Egypt; cursed  
Here at my throne so oft, so bitterly,  
By soldier and civilian, multitudes,  
It seemed it rained his crimes; and finally  
Howled out of Asia by the hungry mobs  
He had harried into frenzy: him, say I,  
Our court sitting in judgment heard, and damned  
By his own sentence.

JUL. [aside]. They're in ambush here  
To choke me with his blood.

QUEEN. My cousin, come!

You're dizzy, sit you down. The dreadful news  
Has left you sick.

JUL. *[aside]*. A woman to sweeten it!

QUEEN. Recover, recollect: your better mind,  
Your truer mind will be, like us, severe.  
It is the parent's pain, it is the ruler's  
That mercy fails and in the larger end  
Justice alone is good. Bethink you now,  
This man your brother and our cousin, raised  
To sit beside us on the Roman throne:  
How can your love in him obliterate  
The thing he was, or rescue even his grave  
From all those visitors —

JUL. *[starting up]*. Yes, Madam, yes!  
Out of the dark a wiry pair of hands  
Upon their victim fastened either side  
Shake the breath out of him, and hoisting high  
His pitiable skeleton in the wind  
Drop it away on some black shore where Ocean  
Shouts a damnation on't for evermore.

KING *[muttering]*.  
Take him away, he is a spy of Night,  
Take him away.

EUS. Your Majesty desires?

*[Motions to the guards.]*

JUL. *[aside]*.  
Their grips contract. O God, tear out my soul!  
QUEEN. My Liege, we lose our purpose. Had we not  
Some questions here to clear?

JUL. [aside].

Questions, oho!

KING. 'T was in Constantinople you last beheld  
This man of wrath?

JUL.

Even as you say.

[*The KING starts. EUSEBIUS smiles. JULIAN continues aside.*]

He smiles.

They've trapped me — a deadly point — what was 't  
I said?KING. Often alone you saw him? Around him you  
hadFriends or a party? What! Th' appointed guard  
Approved your intercourse? Answer me, Sir,  
Your money oiled the locks, and you with Gallus  
Compared your secracies?

JUL. Money — and guards?

Foolish or mad — I nothing understand.

'T was in Constantinople — so much I know —  
Three years ago, as many a man may tell —[*The KING is satisfied.*]

Arbetio, you were there.

ARB. My Lord, I was.

EUS. In days more recent nor so long ago  
As three years since, no doubt your Lordship knows  
Cæsar lay in the city?JUL. Perhaps. I know  
It seems a thousandfold more years than three  
Since last I saw his face.

EUS. Not, then, two months?

JUL. Gods of Heaven! The patience of the sea and  
wind

Would crack like glass and starting up the air  
Draw blood from heaven. Can I go diving down  
The muddy fathoms of your thought? What is 't?  
My eyes are here: why, then, look into them.—  
I'm lost:

The sun there sputters on the verge and goes  
Whirled off in ashes; the earth swells after it;  
It's night, and cruel things, talons and beaks,  
Dash criss-cross in the dark.

EUS. He's wandering.

QUEEN. Open the window. Spring and morning  
soon  
Will charm the frightened brain. It's o'er.—My  
cousin,

We wish you nothing ill. A rumour told  
You and the Cæsar in Constantinople,  
Where marked for punishment he there abode,  
Two months ago conferred.

JUL. Then rumour lies,  
And for all petty mention and regard  
Of time and place and thought and day and hour  
I speak the rough, short truth: I was not there.  
No one but knows, or might if know they would,  
The places of my dwelling, — the better know,  
That not my fancy chooses, but the will  
Of mine imperial cousin and master: whom  
Never at all in aught I disobeyed.

KING. So we believe, approve, and do expect  
As from a Christian subject.

JUL. *[aside]*. Christian!

MER. *[to EUSEBIUS]*.

He sticks at Christian.

KING. It had on us devolved,  
Child that you were, to rear you and to instruct;  
And at Macellum where those your boyish years  
In good seclusion passed, well you remember  
We appointed to you prelates and divines  
Of that True Faith whereof blest Constantine,  
My august father, champion first arose.  
For he, we after him, and with us you,  
Abjure the foolish gods: our throne adores  
Christ Jesus: Rome and Christendom.

MER. *[to EUSEBIUS]*.

He frowns.

EUS. *[to MERCURIUS]*.

This man we called a bookworm hides  
I' the scabbard of his mind a fearful thought.  
I'll not believe it stands for him in earnest  
With baubles of religion.

MER. *[to EUSEBIUS]*. So say I.

EUS. *[aside]*.

'T is passing strange.

KING. You're silent, answer us.

JUL. Of me was nothing asked.

KING. You're trifling, Sir.  
Of old it seems you knew Nicomedeia

And from Macellum wandered oft, a boy,  
In her downfalling temples.

JUL. [aside]. Desperation!  
The Christians on the scent: I stand at bay.

KING. Is 't true?

JUL. Macellum ne'er I left at all  
But by your order. It grates me to repeat  
I speak the truth; and, good or bad, my witness  
I cannot better, not I. Am I a skulk,  
A beast that steals at evening slyly abroad?  
All they can see who will, [aside] and many watch.

KING. You visit oft and travel far to see  
The ruined shrines.

JUL. [quickly, then dreaming].

In this was no restriction  
Upon me made. My study long has lain  
In things forgot, or nearly; and of them  
The shadows lengthening at later day  
And spiritual out of the sun's great heart  
In violet, in crimson, and in gold  
Walk the forlorn campanias, to the sound  
Of Homer's hymns in order filing on  
Between Ionian columns — [MERCURIUS *smiles*.] Mer-  
curius,  
Did ever you see an ape?

MER. My Lord, I did.

JUL. They grin, they chuckle: think you they under-  
stand?

MER. No doubt your Lordship speaks

Of the philosophers and pagan priests  
That in the gardens of Nicomedea —  
Edesius, Chrysanthius, Maximus —

JUL. Poor courtier, you blaspheme.

KING.

What are these men?

JUL. They're — woe to them! — this gentleman has  
said it:

Merely philosophers and pagan priests,  
Who in the brain's high nonsense are embarked  
On seas of error, wastes of speculation,  
After the quest and mirage of the truth.  
Pity for them, my Lords! Had they been able,  
They'd vowed their vulgar lives to better ends,  
To court and office, manners, money, and  
The brilliant business of ambition;  
Also, they'd long abandoned the ancient creed,  
Abandoned long ago beliefs that — they'd  
Been converts to the new, but that their souls,  
Saturate and all kneaded up in one  
With dull ideals of an extinguished world,  
Live in them and go like drunken mariners  
Bows-on for folly and th' enormous night.  
Nevertheless in them I keep some interest —  
Pardon me, all! — I stand not much ashamed  
Of talking idly, now a little and then,  
With these poor people. Alas, your Majesty!  
Let me go back! I beg: let me go back!  
I nothing ask of life, nothing at all  
But what in the divine disposal lies

Obscurely measured to the simple man.  
I do not look to climb the dizzy rungs  
Of power and victory; suspicion  
Loses her time about my lonely life;  
I have no skill with men; the worldly art  
Crazes and irritates me, and the sight  
Of all this complication and design  
Rubs an acid into my brain that makes me —  
A pantomime.

KING. We'll further talk of this  
Another time. The charges laid against you —  
As kindly we foresaw — are things to warn  
Your farther life. You leave us.

*[Exit JULIAN slowly.]*

EUS. *[to MERCURIUS].* Of two things  
This man is one: a viper that belief  
Gasps to conceive of, or else a simpleton  
Fast going mad.

MER. *[to EUSEBIUS].*

He may be what he seems.

KING. Your presences we later shall require.  
From our infinite realm at various points  
Bad news of war and insurrection crowds  
So thick I doubt myself. A single man,  
Whoe'er he be and at his own self's best,  
Recoils, and weakening pitifully cries  
He's but a man.

EUS. This cannot here be said,  
And Fortune bows to Genius on a throne.

KING. You'll find our counsellors assembled: they  
With you await our pleasure.

[*Exeunt EUSEBIUS, MERCURIUS, and ARBETIO.*]  
Eusebius

Alone deserves our sum of royal trust.

QUEEN. As for this Julian —

KING. Of him —

QUEEN. His brain

With study and solitude is all o'erwrought.

He's a mad child; only a little rest

And looking leisurely in human eyes

Would quite restore him. The stuff and fibre is  
there

That you should use, and in your thoughts alone

Of all the cunning men 't was plain to see

You guessed him out.

KING. I did, no doubt I did.

QUEEN. The Spring's far gone and Summer comes  
apace:

We leave for Como. What say you, my Liege?

Your sister Helena and myself can take

This madcap with us; we'll have Mercurius

To advise our action. Near us he'll betray

His way of life, his nature and his hope.

We'll make him ours or — What character had his  
father?

KING. I knew him little; speak not of him.

QUEEN. Or else

What is to 'come of him?

KING. Accursed thought.

QUEEN. Then trust us with him.

KING. Take him away,  
But hold, but — understand me — day and night  
Held fast. I think he should not ever escape.

ACT II

F R A G M E N T S

I

JULIAN. . . . there singing mends  
His tackles on the shore —

REMIGIUS. I'll bid him stop  
To trouble you with his noise.

QUEEN. . . . but that it's youth,  
We all had youth, but not all sang it thro'.

II

QUEEN The rarer gift  
Is in the uses of imagination.  
Many a poet or philosopher  
Above his private ecstasy has seen  
Venus and Truth, but from the sacred mount  
With inward glory silently descended  
Too selfish or too poor to speak a word.  
Some very few have spoken, and by them  
Humanity reminded to herself  
More truly lives. But fewer, oh, how much fewer  
Are they who crowning inspiration gave  
The proof and grace of a majestic life,  
And in the sordid world, the press of men,  
Greed, pleasure, crime, abandon, passion, death,  
Still armoured in their visionary gold  
Did human deeds.

Rather in this they fail; and by how much  
The flame rolls whiter thro' their mortal heart,  
Their brain more terrible, their open eyes  
Quicker and more fantastic, and their souls  
Strung for a brighter flight among the stars,  
So their relapse outdoes disaster — as if  
Genius were a debt of Man to Nature  
Paid alive on itself.

JUL. You know not what it is to be alone;  
You know it not.

EUS.                    Oh, God forgive you this.

III

LATER LYRICS



[It is impossible accurately to date many of the thirty-two poems in this section. It is, however, extremely probable that none were written before the publication of "Dramatic Verses" (October, 1902). The first nine poems are probably earlier than the remaining twenty-three. These last, some of which can be correctly dated, had been collected by the author before his death for inclusion in a volume which he intended soon to publish. They must be taken, therefore, as representing the last lyrical expression of STICKNEY's genius.]



## I

LISTEN! As though from other times and days,  
Continuous and one and hard to know,  
An hymn of human angels very low  
Drifts o'er the ground and by the seashore stays  
Ebbed in the lonely ripple. Hush, it strays  
More near the time and being that are now,  
And, as together with them soon to go,  
Sings itself further on and on always.  
And it will come to pass we also then,  
In some more crimson twilight of our lives,  
Suddenly in the choir nor knowing why,  
Will have a voice within us: all we men  
Between the time that gives and that deprives  
Take up the theme and pass it, as we die.

## II

I saw how that a painter, given o'er  
To love's persuasion, heeded less and less  
The voice that crying in the wilderness  
Had made him strong and lonely and obscure;  
Then as he wandered in the world once more,  
Upon his canvas coloured a distress  
Of dreams and fancy dirtied in the press,  
And gray descended where was light before.  
Wherefore my soul in suffering addressed  
Her question, asking if these lovers e'er  
Had laid the burden of themselves to rest.  
I know that either, smothering despair,  
Had turned away and shed a dreadful tear, —  
And notwithstanding sought each other's breast.

III

WITH long black wings an angel standing by  
Opened his arms, as had he a lover been.  
His lips were very cold and lingered thin  
Along my lips half-broken with a cry.  
From all his body I most dreadfully  
Did draw the cruel cold and slowly win  
Heart-ache on heart-ache; yet I gathered in  
The great black wings that stiffened as to fly.  
In that embrace it seemed that years of pain  
Passed very slow, and yet my body tight  
I held to his till darkness took my brain.  
Somehow I woke, and up the dying night  
I saw him spread great glittering wings of white.  
I knew your brow was cooled, you well again.

IV

You are to me the full vermillion rose  
That Love with trembling arms uplifted crowned,  
Yet moist from April's irised diamond,  
Queen of the summer over all that grows.  
And while the rings of petal still disclose,  
My spirit likewise tenderly unbound  
Falls out in webs of shadow, and around  
The mercy of your beauty finds repose.  
And often when the airs of midnight fail,  
I dream I lift you skyward all for me  
Into the moonlight of futurity,  
A darkling star, a quiet nightingale  
That wakens in my arms beyond the pale  
Of what I was or am or thought to be.

V

THE trees and shrubbery glimmer.  
Lilacs are over.  
A little more sun, and summer  
Will glow in the clover.  
Darling, why tarry so? Come to your lover!

I have played alone in the Spring,  
Laughed at the flowers  
And the birds that nibbling their wing  
Perched on the old gray towers.  
But, darling, the leaves cannot stay on the bowers.

I've tripped it away with your shadow  
Over the grasses,  
And stayed where a breath of meadow  
Happily passes  
Into the city and under the chestnut masses.

V I

A GLAD little rift, so shy  
Back of the boughs' black net,  
Shows in the hurrying sky  
Blue as a violet,  
There! — but it's all blown by.

O what a wind to-day  
Playing at hide and seek  
After the pale sun-ray  
That slips from the cloud,— and quick  
It's raining over the way.

But I know the winter is done,  
No one but me! I know.  
Listen, Lovely, my own,  
Where under the melted snow  
Softly we lie alone.

Open the darling eyes,  
Breathe of the early air!  
My heart, if the weather surprise,  
Will shelter thy bud from care.  
Trust me, darling, arise.

## VII

I LOVE thee longer and I love thee most —  
Altho' I love thee always to the end —  
To-day among the blossoms lightly tossed  
That with the sunshine blend,

Below the bright new leaves and wandering  
Within the warm and lilac-laden breeze,  
I love thee most this only day of spring  
Under the open trees.

This thick curled hyacinth is all for thee.  
The tulips yonder wave to get a smile.  
Make them as happy, love! Ah happy me!  
Love them a little while.

I am so happy, happy, being thine!  
There draws throughout my breast from backward far  
A lonely highroad up to the sky line,  
To thee, my sunset-star.

And tip-toe on the height my soul looked up  
With asking eyes, and softly flew away.  
I love thee in the ways of Paradise,  
I love thee most to-day.

The sun is westering in thy dark red hair;  
Let me throw down my armful here of bloom,  
And leaned on this acacia let us share  
The daylight going home.

And suffer once that from thy lips I drink  
The livelong happiness of our to-day,  
Till at thy feet in songs and prayer I sink  
That thou shouldst call me thine.

## VIII

DEAR and rich as a dawn of summer  
Over the sea and the irised foam,  
Out of the past a bright newcomer  
Into my arms thou wingest home.

Here on the shore with wild lips parted  
I lift my hands in quivering prayer.  
Sunlight is thou, and thou sunhearted  
Draw'st bright-eyed thro' the golden air.

All the days that have tarried sterile  
Burst into flower and lift their crown.  
Walk, my sweet, from the past and peril  
Into my heart and lay thee down.

For nothing of life or the days I wander,  
Myself, hereafter, before or now,  
Or the hour I save or the year I squander  
Is anything any more but thou.

I've pressed thee a perfume of all my spirit  
And jewelled the twilight of my soul:  
O my darling, anoint thee! wear it!  
The days blow by and the seasons roll.

Come! 'bove us here in the russet heather  
Hold thou away to the westering sun  
This bunch of grapes, till they grow together  
And glow and globe like a harvest moon!

Then we 'll ravish them for a greeting,  
And look so near in each other's eyes  
I 'll feel thy blood thro' my bosom beating  
And sigh for my all of life thy sighs.

Nay, and here are my lips that kiss thee,  
Here my cheek on thy bosom rests;  
And filled with light, in my eyes grown misty,  
The lilies in evening of thy breasts;

Here is the cup of my life's full measure:  
Put thy lips to it, Heaven of mine!  
Thine so long as it be thy pleasure, —  
Were 't so no longer, yet always thine.

## IX

AND, the last day being come, Man stood alone  
Ere sunrise on the world's dismantled verge,  
Awaiting how from everywhere should urge  
The Coming of the Lord. And, behold, none

Did come, — but indistinct from every realm  
Of earth and air and water, growing more  
And louder, shriller, heavier, a roar  
Up the dun atmosphere did overwhelm

His ears; and as he looked affrighted round  
Every manner of beast innumerable  
All thro' the shadows crying grew, until  
The wailing was like grass upon the ground.

Asudden then within his human side  
Their anguish, since the goad he wielded first,  
And, since he gave them not to drink, their thirst,  
Darted compressed and vital. — As he died,

Low in the East now lighting gorgeously  
He saw the last sea-serpent iris-mailed  
Which, with a spear transfixèd, yet availed  
To pluck the sun down into the dead sea.

X

DEDICATION

So far be your journey as a bird's  
Who, feeling winter whet the air,  
Gyres and from the zenith there  
Slants infinitely down southwards  
On outspread wings  
And sings.

Within my bosom blew this rose  
That on the moonlit autumn wind  
I toss to you — and may you find  
Upon your pillow of repose  
The flower of  
My love.

X I

A F L O W E R

As kneeling at a water's edge  
Into my heart when I look down,  
Thy face uprising from the sedge  
Lies on the surface water-blown;

And while the current pushes rings  
About thy cheek, thy chin and brow,  
I muse and ponder many things:  
For who am I? am I not thou?

'T is therefore all these idle hours  
I spend alone and none knows why:  
I see thee in the water-flowers  
Upon the current doubtfully.

X I I

A STONE

WITH burning hands and eyes all dull  
I bring to you this drop of fire,  
This topaz where the summerful  
Of August afternoons expire.

The stone you gave me long ago:  
A meteor from your life, it sought  
My lonely bosom and below  
Lay glowing in the gloom of thought.

From thence I took it pure and whole  
To comfort me to-day, and found  
That from the waters of my soul  
These bands of gold have drawn around,

This little setting's nervous art,  
Slow-formed but mighty, made to hold  
The sunshine visiting the dark —  
You, darling, that my arms enfold.

X I I I

P A R D O N

I DREAMED that I was blind and you were mine;  
And for that I had spoiled your better part,  
Did iron shame and frenzy pace my heart  
Like wolves. Yet sweeter ne'er the sun did shine,  
The swaying flowers, the colours vespertine  
And the strange quietude of human art.  
In my dead eyes I felt the water start  
And falling down I prayed: "If I am thine,  
That here within thy shadow I am well  
And live so in the nearness of thy soul,  
Forgive me that I linger in thy sight!  
Forgive that up the cliffs of heaven I stole  
And at the brink seized thee and with thee fell  
Backward and down the oceans of the night."

XIV

S E R V I C E

CHIDE me not, darling, that I sing  
Familiar thoughts and metres old:  
Nay, do not scold  
My spirit's childish uttering.

I know not why 't is that or this  
I murmur to you thus or so:  
Only I know  
It throbs across my silences,

It blows over my heart, — a long  
Infinite wind, again, again!  
Again! and then  
My life kneels down into a song.

## X V

## CHESTNUTS IN NOVEMBER

## I

Nor all the trees are done, the branches mean,  
The trunks begrimed and sodden, no, not all.  
How fresh and, tho' a few, how prodigal  
On yonder chestnut here and there are seen  
White wisps, and, frilled about them, bits of green!  
They colour on the deadness of the Fall,  
They spring and with the 'lated swallows call  
Happy next year into the year that's been.  
O call not Nature spendthrift, and of these  
Say not they bloom in error for the frost!  
The sweetness of all things are promises  
That sing our souls a little further on  
Toward that which may be found in what is lost,  
Which may come back again of what is gone.

I ALSO, where I stand within thy soul  
A plant of thine and growing in thy year,  
Must, if the season turneth to the sere,  
If so it please thee, lose my aureole.  
Yet tho' my leaves to the last one should roll  
Away down on the wind and disappear,  
And I should nothing question but the drear  
Great darkness should impenetrate me whole,  
The midnight in my eyes would ne'ertheless  
Not firmly hang, but sway, and breaking shine  
With thoughts of gold and stars of happiness,  
That at the end thou mightest reposess,  
Mightest possess again and further bless  
My sad and human acres, that are thine.

X VI

F I D E L I T Y

Not lost or won but above all endeavour  
Thy life like heaven circles around mine;  
Thy eyes it seems upon my eyes did shine  
Since forever.

For aught he summon up his earliest hour  
No man remembers the surprise of day,  
For where he saw with virgin wonder play  
The first flower.

And o'er the imagination's last horizon  
No brain has leaning descried nothing more:  
Still there are stars and in the night before  
More have arisen.

Not won or lost is unto thee my being;  
Our eyes were always so together met.  
If mine should close, if ever thine forget,  
Time is dying.

## XVII

WITH thy two eyes look on me once again.  
 Since certain days, I know not how it is,  
 I feel the swell of tidal darknesses  
 Climb in my soul and overwhelm my brain.

To-day is Spring, I know that it is Spring.  
 The new-mown hay about the lilac bush  
 Sweetens the morning wind, and there a flush  
 Of roses leads the garden's offering.

From leafy heights of chestnut hang and play  
 Long webs of sun and shadow, and the bloom  
 Is leaning up its head above the gloom —  
 White in the happy blue and yellow May.

And all the air sparkles with minstrelsy —  
 Fresh, early love-songs twittered wing to wing  
 Over the dew. O loved one, it is Spring!  
 With thy two eyes look on me ere I die.

It must be thus, I knew it thus would be;  
 And it embalms my soul now to behold  
 The eternal year disclose its heart of gold  
 And whirl in petalled clouds about the sky.

I do beseech thee here, as falling down  
 Before thy feet I render thee my love,  
 Look on me now, look on me from above  
 As tho' in heavenly truth thou wert my own.

X V I I I

WHEN bye and bye relenting you regret  
All of these possible and vanished hours,  
And, rolling up, the certain tempest scours  
Your sky where not another star will set;  
When all before your eyes, no longer wet,  
By life's memorial paths and fading bowers  
Shrivels the remnant of a thousand flowers,  
Do not forget, I say, do not forget  
The long and lonely hours I burned away,  
The lonely days; in pity do recall  
What miles of solitude I suffered o'er.  
It need not so have been, but you did say  
It should be so, and I replied, It shall,  
And lo, it is, it is for evermore

XIX

L O N E L I N E S S

THESE autumn gardens, russet, gray and brown,  
The sward with shrivelled foliage strown,  
The shrubs and trees  
By weary wings of sunshine overflown  
And timid silences,—

Since first you, darling, called my spirit yours,  
Seem happy, and the gladness pours  
From day to day,  
And yester-year across this year endures  
Unto next year away.

Now in these places where I used to rove  
And give the dropping leaves my love  
And weep to them,  
They seem to fall divinely from above,  
Like to a diadem

Closing in one with the disheartened flowers.  
High up the migrant birds in showers  
Shine in the sky,  
And all the movement of the natural hours  
Turns into melody.

## XX

As pilgrims, when the ways of winter ope,  
Would fain behold the places where they prayed  
Alive with violets and new with shade,  
And, where they knelt, a golden buttercup:  
So strains within my soul a wandering hope  
To see how brightly now are rearrayed  
The stations where I saw her, and, afraid,  
My kneeling life was lost and carried up —  
A thing that in the praise of vanishing  
Did like an incense for a moment's space,  
Burning itself away from what it was,  
Outsoar the elevation and outsing  
The choirs of glory, while with fragrant wing  
It veiling passed before Madonna's face.

XXI

QUIET after the rain of morning  
Midday covers the dampened trees;  
Sweet and fresh in the languid breeze  
Still returning  
Birds are twittering at ease.

And to me in the far and foreign  
Land as further I go and come,  
Sweetly over the wearisome  
Endless barren  
Flutter whisperings of home.

There between the two hillocks lightens  
Straight and little a bluish bar:  
I feel the strain of the mariner  
Grows and tightens  
After home and after her.

X X I I

If tho' alone I scarce do sigh  
Because thy spirit stayeth by,  
Think what it were if thou wert near,  
If thou wert here.

Within the sweet-aired mountain town  
So far, so strange, so all our own,—  
Why makest thou so long delay  
So far away ?

The waters tumbling make a sound  
Of all our joys that fall to ground;  
The stars shine to the uttermost  
Of what we lost.

If some one only happy be  
For this our narrowed destiny!  
If some one draw a gladder breath  
Out of our death.

## XXIII

GRUDGE not that I so long for thee,  
These foreign hours within the land  
Where every day brings song for thee  
And 'fore my sight  
In every light  
Thou dost stand.

I ask thee not to follow me  
And leave the treasure of thy soul,  
Nor e'er again to hallow me  
With the surprise  
Of thy sweet eyes  
Opened whole.

My dream shall not lie heavy on  
The tender region of thy hope,—  
The sunrise of oblivion  
Across the sky's  
Nocturnities  
Flutters up!

But when across the greenery  
Of forest tree and meadow grass  
And o'er the summer scenery  
Sunlit and kind  
The twilight wind  
Comes to pass,

The tears arise so fortunate,  
The heart's delight so fair and free —  
Alas that I'm importunate,  
If yet I grieve  
Not then to give  
Half to thee.

XXIV

SPIRRS that might have been,  
Ye birds and butterflies  
Under the showers!  
Why will ye ever lean  
Your weft of music and of irises  
On my plain flowers?

Come here, I pray, no more,  
Or for a little while  
Let me alone.  
More honey's at the core  
Of the blue thyme and little camomile  
There further on.

The sky is still and blue,  
But changing in your flight  
Flushes and sings.  
Then do I crimson too  
And humming gladly, suffer all the night  
Your absent wings.

XXV.

S E P A R A T I O N

GOOD-NIGHT, my sweetheart. Spring has come again  
And the May moonlight strokes the rainy trees.  
The sky is fresh and happy; fireflies  
Rise in its azure edge and wane.

Alone I go and lay me down alone,  
Yet on my lips the sweetness of thy breast,—  
Yet on thy bosom lay my cheek to rest  
And fold my soul forever in thy own.



X X V I

A T S A I N T E - M A R G U E R I T E

THE gray tide flows and flounders in the rocks  
Along the crannies up the swollen sand.  
Far out the reefs lie naked — dunes and blocks  
Low in the watery wind. A shaft of land  
Going to sea thins out the western strand.

It rains, and all along and always gulls  
Career sea-screaming in and weather-glossed.  
It blows here, pushing round the cliff; in lulls  
Within the humid stone a motion lost  
Ekes out the flurried heart-beat of the coast.

It blows and rains a pale and whirling mist  
This summer morning. I that hither came —  
Was it to pluck this savage from the schist,  
This crazy yellowish bloom without a name,  
With leatherne blade and tortured wiry frame?

Why here alone, away, the forehead pricked  
With dripping salt and fingers damp with brine,  
Before the offal and the derelict  
And where the hungry sea-wolves howl and  
whine  
Live human hours? now that the columbine

Stands somewhere shaded near the fields that fall  
Great starry sheaves of the delighted year,  
And globing rosy on the garden wall  
The peach and apricot and soon the pear  
Drip in the teasing hand their sugared tear.

Inland a little way the summer lies.  
Inland a little and but yesterday  
I saw the weary teams, I heard the cries  
Of sicklemen across the fallen hay,  
And buried in the sunburned stacks I lay

Tasting the straws and tossing, laughing soft  
Into the sky's great eyes of gold and blue  
And nodding to the breezy leaves aloft  
Over the harvest's mellow residue.  
But sudden then — then strangely dark it grew.

How good it is, before the dreary flow  
Of cloud and water, here to lie alone  
And in this desolation to let go  
Down the ravine one with another, down  
Across the surf to linger or to drown

The loves that none can give and none receive,  
The fearful asking and the small retort,  
The life to dream of and the dream to live!  
Very much more is nothing than a part,  
Nothing at all and darkness in the heart.

I would my manhood now were like the sea.—  
Thou at high-tide, when compassing the land  
Thou find'st the issue short, questioningly  
A moment poised, thy floods then down the strand  
Sink without rancour, sink without command,

Sink of themselves in peace without despair,  
And turn as still the calm horizon turns,  
Till they repose little by little nowhere  
And the long light unfathomable burns  
Clear from the zenith stars to the sea-fern.

Thou art thy Priest, thy Victim and thy God.  
Thy life is bulwarked with a thread of foam,  
And of the sky, the mountains and the sod  
Thou askest nothing, evermore at home  
In thy own self's perennial masterdom.

[1902?]

XXVII

I DREAMED. Aye, it was very dark  
And yet the cliffs were red.  
I sat me down hard by a watershed  
And watched as in the current sped  
Spark after spark  
Down the dark.

The pine-trees with their branches hummed  
A warm, mid-summer air.  
That night none of the nightingales were there.  
A cricket, in the grasses rare,  
Close by, benumbed,  
Sometimes thrummed.

I leaned over the water's flight,  
And where the foam threads whirred,  
Out of the cataract I freshly heard  
The voice of an alighting bird;  
"Come down the night  
To the light."

[1908]

XXVIII

LEAVE him now quiet by the way  
To rest apart.

I know what draws him to the dust alway  
And churns him in the builder's lime;  
He has the fright of time.

I heard it knocking in his breast  
A minute since;  
His human eyes did wince,  
He stubborned like the massive slaughter beast  
And as a thing o'erwhelmed with sound  
Stood bolted to the ground.

Leave him, for rest alone can cure —  
If cure there be —  
This waif upon the sea.  
He is of those who slanted the great door  
And listened — wretched little lad —  
To what they said.

[1903]

XXX  
AN ATHENIAN GARDEN

THE burned and dusty garden said:  
"My leaves are echoes, and thy earth  
Is packed with footsteps of the dead.

"The strength of spring-time brought to birth  
Some needles on the crooked fir, —  
A rose, a laurel — little worth.

"Come here, ye dreaming souls that err  
Among the immortals of the grave:  
My summer is your sepulchre.

"On earth what darker voices rave  
Than now this sea-breeze, driving dust  
And whirling radiance wave on wave,

"With lulls so fearful thro' the gust  
That on the shapeless flower-bed  
Like timber splits the yellow crust.

"O thirsty, thirsty are the dead,  
Still thirsty, ever unallayed.  
Where is no water, bring no bread."

I then had almost answer made,  
When round the path in pleasure drew  
Three golden children to the shade.

They stirred the dust with pail and hoe.  
Then did the littlest from his fears  
Come up and with his eyes of blue

Give me some berries seriously.  
And as he turned to his brother, I  
Looked after him thro' happy tears.

[1903]

XXX

SONNETS FROM GREECE

[1903]

SUNIUM

THESE are the strings of the *Æ*gean lyre  
Across the sky and sea in glory hung:  
Columns of white thro' which the wind has flung  
The clouds and stars, and drawn the rain and fire.  
Their flutings now to fill the notes' desire  
Are strained and dubious, yet in music young  
They cast their full-blown answer far along  
To where in sea the island hills expire.  
How bravely from the quarry's earthen gloom  
In snow they rose amid the blue to stand  
Melodious and alone on Sunium!  
They shall not wither back into the land.  
The sun that harps them with his golden hand  
Doth slowly with his hand of gold consume.

## M T . L Y K A I O N

ALONE on Lykaion since man hath been  
Stand on the height two columns, where at rest  
Two eagles hewn of gold sit looking East  
Forever; and the sun goes up between.  
Far down around the mountain's oval green  
An order keeps the falling stones abreast.  
Below within the chaos last and least  
A river like a curl of light is seen.  
Beyond the river lies the even sea,  
Beyond the sea another ghost of sky,—  
O God, support the sickness of my eye  
Lest the far space and long antiquity  
Suck out my heart, and on this awful ground  
The great wind kill my little shell with sound.

## NEAR HELIKON

By such an all-embalming summer day  
As sweetens now among the mountain pines  
Down to the cornland yonder and the vines,  
To where the sky and sea are mixed in gray,  
How do all things together take their way  
Harmonious to the harvest, bringing wines  
And bread and light and whatsoe'er combines  
In the large wreath to make it round and gay.  
To me my troubled life doth now appear  
Like scarce distinguishable summits hung  
Around the blue horizon: places where  
Not even a traveller purposeth to steer,—  
Whereof a migrant bird in passing sung,  
And the girl closed her window not to hear.

EL E U S I S

HERE for a thousand years processional  
Winding around the Eleusinian bay,  
The world with drooping eyes has made her way  
By stair and portal to the sombre Hall.  
As then the litanies antiphonal  
Obscurely through the pillars sang away,  
It dawned, and in the shaft of sudden day  
Demeter smiling gave her bread to all.  
They drew as waves out of a twilight main,  
Long genuflecting multitudes, to feed  
With God upon the sacramental grain.  
And lo, the temple veil was rent in twain;  
But thro' the rift their choirs in silver train  
Still passing out rehearsed the human creed.

I LONG desired to see, I now have seen.  
Yonder the heavenly everlasting bride  
Draws the white shadows to her virgin side,  
Ida, whom long ago God made his Queen.  
The daylight weakens to a fearful sheen;  
The mountains slumber seaward sanctified,  
And cloudy shafts of bluish vapour hide  
The places where a sky and world have been.  
O Ida, snowy bride that God espoused  
Unto that day that never wholly is,  
Whiten thou the horizon of my eyes,  
That when the momentary sea aroused  
Flows up in earthquake, still thou mayest rise  
Sacred above the quivering Cyclades.

II

Art thou still veiled, and ne'er before my sight  
At sunset, as I yearn to see thee most,  
Wilt thou appear in crimson robes and lost,  
Aloft the crystal vapours of the night?  
Is it the rule of all things infinite  
To trail across remoteness and in clouds  
The glory of their sacerdotal shrouds,  
And shade with evening their eternal light?  
O travellers abroad the mortal plain  
On weary beasts of burden overta'en  
By the unspeakable hours, I say: Press on.  
For tho' a little part be hardly seen,  
Hope spangles out the rest, and while ye strain  
Another cloud already, look, is gone.

## III

As now my ship at midday passes out  
Into the lonely circles of the sea,  
Thou o'er thy southern island loftily  
Vague in the light appearest like a thought.  
Over the blazing waves my vessel caught  
Continues more into infinity:  
And, as adoring I look after thee,  
My eyes see white and in thy place is nought.  
In the decline and speed of human things  
When time drags on the dreamer by the hand  
Like an unwilling child and reprobate,  
It is enough if on the parting sings  
The certain voice he could not understand —  
It is enough, it is not yet too late.

X X X I

S I X O ' C L O C K

Now burst above the city's cold twilight  
The piercing whistles and the tower-clocks:  
For day is done. Along the frozen docks  
The workmen set their ragged shirts aright.  
Thro' factory doors a stream of dingy light  
Follows the scrimmage as it quickly flocks.  
To hut and home among the snow's gray blocks.—  
I love you, human labourers. Good-night!  
Good-night to all the blackened arms that ache!  
Good-night to every sick and sweated brow,  
To the poor girl that strength and love forsake,  
To the poor boy who can no more! I vow  
The victim soon shall shudder at the stake  
And fall in blood: we bring him even now.

[1908]

XXXII

IN A CITY GARDEN

How strange that here is nothing as it was!  
The sward is young and new,  
The sod there shapes a different mass,  
The random trees stand other than I knew.  
No, here the Past has left no residue,  
No aftermath!  
By a new path  
The workmen homeward in the city twilight pass.

Yet was this willow here.  
It hung as now its olive skeins aloft  
Into the sky, then blue and clear,—  
And yonder pair of poplar trees  
Rose also, soft  
And sibilant in the glory of the breeze.  
It's early dark. One scarce distinguishes  
Their sullen feathering in the autumn sky.  
'T is warm and still.  
Dull o'er the town the vapours lie.  
Innumerable  
And dodging the uncertain stare,  
The small, shrewd lampions dot the air.

Many like me  
Loiter perhaps as I in after years,  
As looking here to see  
Some vestige of the living that was theirs,

Some trace of yesterday,  
Some hint or remnant, echo, clue — some thing,  
Some very little thing of what was they.  
Sure such are near! Else were it not so still  
This evening;  
So human-still and warm and kind.  
'T is as of many moved  
In unison of will and mind to sing  
Low litanies to that which they had wholly loved.

How sweet it is  
Under the perishable trees  
To hear the wings of the one human soul  
Fluttering up  
In Time's dark branches to the lucid stars.  
More than Despair is Hope,  
And more than Hope is the Hope that despairs,  
And more than all  
Is Love that disbelieves the real years.

Here in this place  
One August morning — when the earlier crowd,  
Showmen or populace,  
From many a region and of curious face,  
Abroad the holiday  
Quaint in the sun with garb and gesture glowed,  
And, speaking grave or gay  
The various accent of their lonely race,  
Between the shadowy gold bazars idled away —

She, as a cloud  
All sunrise-coloured and alone,  
Thro' the blue summer trembling came to me.  
I dried her tears and here we sat us down.  
Little by little, as tripping oversea  
On flame-tipped waves the daylight's long surprise  
Sweeps world and heaven in one,  
So love across our eyes  
Broke with the sun.  
Happy we walked away. The fairy sight  
Untangling shook a thousand chequered fires.  
Low under scarlet awnings rung on rung,  
Copper and bronze and azurite,  
Ranged on the sagging wires  
The trifles clinked in the red light.  
From beam and niche vendors in strange attires,  
Slipping dark hands along,  
Unhooked the quiet wool, the gaudy chintz,  
Or, precious where it hung,  
Long fluid jewels of auroral silk:  
And dryly to the sense  
Their attars old and dusty powders clung.  
Still passed the weavers and the dyers  
Many a jar, a bowl  
Turned as of water or of milk —  
Glazen and jade and porcelain —  
Far down the shadows colouring stole.  
As one had shook a jungle after rain  
And basketing the drops at random spilled

Their red and green, their topaz and sapphires,  
 All were here piled.—  
 And wandering out we smiled  
 To see across the glowing noon so high,  
 So high and far,  
 The incandescent minarets and domes and spires  
 Lifting the fusion of their coloured choirs  
 To the sky  
 Softly — save only where  
 A flag or pennant fallen slack  
 Shotted the dazzling air.  
 I came to-day to find her, I came back  
 Humble with sweet desires  
 Across this dun September atmosphere  
 To her.  
 I came, I knew she was not here:  
 Now let me go.  
 I came, I come because I love her so.

Not in the acres of the Soul  
 Does Nature drive the ploughshare of her change.  
 It is not strange  
 That here in part and whole  
 The faithful eye sees all things as before.  
 For past the newer flowers,  
 Above the recent trees and clouds come o'er,  
 Love finds the other hours  
 Once more.

IV

A DRAMATIC SCENE

[1904]



[At the time of his death STICKNEY was contemplating the publication of a volume to be called "Dramatic Scenes," in which the following drama was to have been included. The title has therefore been retained.

This piece was begun in the autumn of 1903, after STICKNEY's return to America, and finished on January 28, 1904. It is, therefore, his last completed attempt in the dramatic form of poetry.]



SCENE: *The living room of the Cellini house in Via C—, Florence. A crackling fire of oak-sticks in the hearth. GIOVANNI CELLINI seated, and his daughter COSA spinning; later his son BENVENUTO.*

GIOVANNI. Has he come?

COSA.

Not yet.

GIOV.

The Campanile

Told seven awhile ago.

COSA.

He'll soon return.

No doubt Marchone is hurried, works him hard,  
Or a late client rich and particular  
Puts them to trouble.

GIOV.

No, Cosa, 't is not that,

Or if maybe to-day, not every day;  
For every day he lingers and retards.  
He shuns our fireside, he no more clings to  
Our tedious home that loves him all too well,—  
Headstrong and hard and haughty! Why even me,  
Me that begot him, poor old father, me  
He hates.

COSA. Father!

GIOV.

Deny 't!

COSA.

I do, I do.

GIOV. Why then can't he at evening, since he knows—  
I taught him — so deliciously to run  
The flute's heart-breaking scale, so tenderly  
To use the grief of yonder clarinet —  
Why does he grudge me? Oft in after time

These rough refusals and discourtesy  
 Cry down the winds of thought, and one by one  
 In sobs before our parents' grave, we rue  
 Our sordid sweetness.

COSA. No, Sir, no! forgive him.  
 He's rough, is Benvenuto, and in nothing  
 Would pain you.

GIOV. Why then refuse me so to play?  
 I'm old and cannot — “aged and unfit,”  
 So reads the act. O Cosa, 't was a stroke  
 When first I read it — I carry't always — here,  
 Here 't is! we'll read it over again once more:  
 “Whereas  
 “Giovanni of the Cellini, one  
 “O' the tibiclus or fifes to said republic,  
 “Is aged and unfit for playing, and  
 “On his age's account can hardly come  
 “And every day appear to play and do  
 “Service to said republic as required,  
 “Therefore  
 “They have deliberated” —

Here, Cosa, read!  
 The words become too long for my old eyes.

COSA. Sir, you forget: I cannot read.  
 GIOV. Well then!  
 “Deliberated and in deliberation  
 “Have carried and have all in all removed  
 “The aforesaid Giovanni of the Cellini” —  
 Why do they say, I wonder, *all in all*?

"From his said office of tibiccu or fife  
 "To said most high and honourable Lords.  
 "And because said Giovanni is poor and old,  
 "And has in their said palace service done  
 "Years six and thirty well and faithfully,  
 "Wishing therefor him somewhat to repay  
 "And tend his age and some support provide,  
 "Therefore have they decreed to same Giovanni  
 "The pension alms 't is usual to give  
 "Players of their said palace: pounds, to wit,  
 "Eight, of the little florins, every month  
 "During the said Giovanni's life."

I'm old,

And like mine unrequired melody,  
 My part is over.

cosa.            A step — he's coming — now —  
 It dies away.

GIOV.            Yet he detests the flute!  
 Old as I am and poor, 't were a good life,  
 Tho' hard the wages, if at ending day  
 Good music by the candle sat — and his  
 Outsings by far Italy's loveliest.  
 I taught him: down upon the stops myself  
 I held his baby fingers. I'd divined  
 The perfect flutist in him, the lip and hands,  
 And stars of music in his big blue eyes.  
 This drawing he potters o'er at weary night,  
 Of groups and visionary postures framed  
 In scroll-work, while his feverish brain upreared

Hammer and tongs descends upon the ore;  
 This love of metals and design of forms —  
 You think him sculptor?

COSA. Why, father, they say —

GIOV. They say and push his obstination.

It happens oft our children misconceive  
 Their proper genius, and how much soe'er  
 We pull their error back to the good road,  
 They clench the bit and bolt. He's a musician.

COSA. Yet in his fever — scarce he's now recovered —  
 Whene'er you spoke of music, how the pulse  
 Grew flurried! You remember! spare him.

GIOV. Sure

I urge him to himself. He's a musician,  
 And proved it well, when in the Palace Hall,  
 We fifemen playing before the Signoria,  
 My little man was hoisted to the book,  
 And straddle upon the velvet shoulders of  
 The page-at-arms, his treble played away.

COSA. He was eleven.

GIOV. Ten, Cosa, ten — or nine,  
 But ten I swear to.

COSA. All Florence rang of him.

GIOV. O what a day when the organ pipes I made —  
 So full of angels that in recompense  
 Placed at Magnificent Lorenzo's word  
 On rushing wings they came tremendous down  
 Santa Maria Novella — how there they sang  
 On Benvenuto's baptism like a choir!

COSA. Sir, played they at mine?

GIOV. Come, daughter, in my arms.

In you they play forever.

I love to hear

An organ's fluttering base, a languid lute;  
 To hear the watered silver of a harp  
 Pass off in shower throughout the melody;  
 To hear a viol weeping — Cosa, I brought  
 Some old sticks homeward yesterday from work:  
 Go fetch them, from my closet, bundled in  
 My blouse.

[*Exit cosa.*]

The master-mason said to-day

I was<sup>4</sup> too old, clumsy my work. Alas,  
 And Benvenuto of the goldsmith earns  
 Half what he might at music.

[*Enter cosa.*]

COSA. I cannot find them,  
 And in the closet is nothing, Sir, but clothes.

GIOV. Lost then perhaps — but no! Still against my  
 side

I feel them pinch; for weary 't is, the way  
 Thro' fallow fields from San Domenico.  
 I got them home! among them a certain piece  
 Of grain and fibre, and, by my knuckle rapped, so true!  
 Lost, no! impossible, for I hid them safe —  
 Good Jesus, by the chimney, Cosa, there —

[*He gets up from his chair and they both kneel  
 down, sorting the rubbish.*]

Some of them in the firewood! Where's my piece?

COSA. Let me do 't, father.

GIOV. Ai, my old back and knees!

Where is my piece? the candle! O Virgin Mary,  
It's lost.

COSA. Here's more of them.

GIOV. Yet not the one.

COSA. Another.

GIOV. Show me.

COSA. Look, Sir.

GIOV. Love, 't is found,

It is my piece, for sure, it is my piece.

Your mother, Cosa, is thrifty and virtuous,  
Good housewife, clean and good, so very good,—  
But for the arts her talent and regard  
Were ever small. — Up, help me, daughter! up!

*[He gets back to his chair and sits whittling  
and singing snatches, while COSA resumes  
her spinning.]*

My chair, and from the table drawer find me  
My jackknife. Look, betimes this wretched board  
In growing modulations will become  
Half a viola, and well Luigi said  
That such are music's silkworms.

COSA *[aside]*. Benvenuto 's  
Uncommon late. He'll not come back to-night.

GIOV. *She lingered by the river-bed,  
Dropped on a knee to levy  
The swimming pitcher to her head.  
Oh it was heavy!*

*The eyes of love are soon to fill  
And quick is the breast to quiver.  
A star hung over the olive-hill.*

*She said to me : "Never."  
In Campo Santo lives a grave  
I and the moon together —  
I and the moon together —  
I and the —*

'T is always so: the memory of a song  
First weakens at the end and the poor singer  
Rushing the climax like a stormy bird  
Feels for his voice and hears it die away.  
As, Cosa, you were saying —

COSA. I? Nothing, Sir.

GIOV. *Purple anemone,  
Why should the sunrise April morn  
Gild and bedew thy petal torn ?*

My voice has much gone off, and by degrees  
The mellow sureness of its register  
Is shaken nearly all. I'll sing no more;  
And then the viol throughout my merry life  
I used and cannot play — the absent viol  
Quite leaves the singer homesick and destroys  
The foliage by the river of his theme.

*I waited —*

[*To himself.*] This timber lost — 't was pity pitiful.

*I waited for her near her farm  
Close up beside a cypress tree.*

*The road lay white as linen by,  
And moonlight made the meadow warm.*

*She came, and as she came the air  
Against her laid her veil and dress.  
I held my brow for giddiness,  
My hands for fever. She was there.*

*She put her finger to her mouth  
And down thro' olives led the way.  
I followed while the bird of May  
Sang down the branches on her youth.*

*Along the glade of dewy dark  
I breathed her, she had gone before.  
I ran, I heard a shutting door ;  
And soon the farm-dogs ceased to bark. —*

*Go, silly heart, and let me be.  
The wind will show you round the hill ;  
Far down, the river turns a mill,  
They say beyond it is all sea.*

*Go where you will, go where you please.  
What should I care ? My heart is burned. —  
Ah, God, if only she returned !  
I 'd cry for pardon on my knees.*

[*A noise is heard on the stair.*]

COSA. It's he. —

[Enter BENVENUTO.]

God, brother, how you're ruffled, torn!  
 Across your forehead —  
 BENVENUTO. Hush! give me a dish —  
 Beans, mush — What have you? I'm hungry.  
 GIOV. But, my son,  
 Your forehead's —

BEN. Scratched, Sir: nothing. Let me be.  
 GIOV. Cosa, give him a soup. You're bleeding, boy.  
 Cosa, a sponge. What was't?

BEN. I said, Sir, nothing.

GIOV. A scuffle?

BEN. No.

GIOV. Come tell me.

BEN. What?

GIOV. You fought —

BEN. Why, yes, I fought. What of't?

GIOV. With whom, I say?

BEN. With Piero Torregiani.

GIOV. Him? What for?

BEN. For nothing.

GIOV. Come —

BEN. Why —

GIOV. Come, you quarrelled: why?

BEN. He scoffed —

GIOV. At you.

BEN. No, not at me.

GIOV. Not you?

Who then?

BEN. He jeered at Michael Angelo.

GIOV. God help us! fight for Michael Angelo!

He's mad.

BEN. Give me my soup.

GIOV. How happened it?

A son who in the lanes of Florence walks

With boiling fist for Angelo, who, gorged

With Papal florins, grandly lives in Rome!

What was 't that Piero said? What was 't?

BEN. He said —

No, no, enough, I'm sick of 't. Let me be.

I'm mad, you say, Sir: let me grind alone

And turn my knuckles in the granite. Yes,

He scoffed at Michael Angelo, and I

Nailed him a crash between his yellow eyes.

GIOV. But why? why, Benvenuto?

COSA. Brother, here's

Your pot of soup; and now the water's warm

I'll sponge your bloody forehead. Sit you down —

Come quietly, now come and tell us.

BEN. Well,

We walked, Piero and I — I hate the man

And smell him like a pestilence — I walked

Down Via Larga, where from the Palace I

With certain drawings came. — No, I've enough.

COSA. And then —

BEN. And there the splendid man,

Tall, beautiful, and under shaggy brows

A flash he clips with blinking — you'd have said

A soldier, not a sculptor, but he carves  
 For them in England, and is now returned  
 To catch some poor Italian prentices  
 For export — me he baited, for a time,  
 But he'll return without, if he return.

GIOV. He's dead?

BEN. I wish so — only a little more —

COSA. On Via Larga — come —

BEN. He met me, and  
 "That scroll there," asked the glory of his voice,  
 "Are drawings?" "So," said I; and he, "What of?"  
 I pulled him to the Duomo steps. — You know  
 'T was given out a fresco be designed  
 For the Palazzo Vecchio, picturing  
 How Pisa was besieged by Florentines.  
 And master Leonardo worked to purpose:  
 Before the walls and puffing sky of cloud  
 A skirmish thrills the plain — hot work and high;  
 The horses rear, the riders shining up  
 To lunge with sword or battleaxe; one down,  
 Another falling, all constrained and each  
 Alive, — with certain seizure and defence  
 Of gonfalons afloat on tufted plumes  
 As ravishes the sight.

GIOV. I saw the thing,  
 I was a draughtsman once. It is an art —

COSA. Was there another?

BEN. Michael Angelo's.  
 A human hand can cast no further.

It is a summer's day, and Arno lies  
 Languid throughout the picture. In it bathe  
 A pack of footsoldiers which on the instant  
 Hear an alarm: the swimming strain for shore,  
 Some with uneasy arms are wading, others fall  
 Or splashing catch pieces of jutting turf,  
 While clear upon the bank the nimble ones  
 Run swift and naked to repairs of armour  
 And weapons stacked in file over the plain.  
 Such grouped and quick variety! So full,  
 Muscular and harmonious! Such relief  
 Of flesh and surface! It enlarged my eyes  
 With wonder and my brain with ecstasy. —  
 Bread, Cosa, and another flask of wine.

GIOV. Was this your brawl with Piero?

BEN. Good father,  
 I'd copied this design of Buonarroti's,  
 And to Piero unrolled my drawing. He  
 With puckered nose said, looking: "Michael was  
 " My schoolmate: we together learned to draw  
 " Of Fra Filippo in the Carmine.  
 " He has a nose remembers me! He used  
 " To hawk and whistle at our scrawls, to say:  
 " " Your hero'd best keep seated or his thighs  
 " " Would, one jostle his heart, the other pull  
 " " His hip-bone to the knee;" or 'Cupid there  
 " " High up weighs fifty tons: if he should fall  
 " " O woe unto the dwellers of the plain!"  
 " " One day I stomached him no more. He peered

"Over me at my board: 'That spider-web' —  
"I'd drawn a woman running. At the word,  
"Sprung up I shot my knuckles at his nose.  
"Consult it for my aim." He snickered, but  
Inside my brain it swam like fumes of hell.  
I leaned into his face and shouted: "Cur,  
"You broke it?" "Little boy," he said. We fought.  
'T was ugly doing. I caught him full, tho', when  
He fumbled for his knife; but from the crowd  
That screamed and thickened round us, certain friends  
O'erpowering shouldered him delirious home.  
He fought me well.

COSA. You 're wounded, brother ?

BEN. No.

The scurvy fool! the braggart! I'd as lief  
See adders rear out of my folded arms  
As that man's face again.

**GIOV.** This for my son!

BEN. But I was hungry! There, I've eat enough!  
Cosa, give me my board and pencils. 'T should be late  
And father's bed-time.

[COSA gets him his drawing tools. BENVENUTO then works at the table while GIOVANNI goes on whittling and humming.]

**GIOV.** At the jeweller

## Marchoni's, any work in prospect?

**BEN.** **Much.**

And of myself a buckle in good gold  
Is ordered. I've a posture in my eyes

Of Sirens interlaced with golden scales  
 Roughing a silver ground. Leave me alone.  
 This candle gutters.

GIOV. Son, do you remember  
 The ending of the song — for I forgot:

*In Campo Santo is a grave  
 I and the moon together —*

I hear the rest, but like an echo, gone —  
 Or going from the gateways of my voice.

BEN. [sings].

*In Campo Santo is a grave  
 Where I and the moon together  
 Go linger oft and cannot leave  
 Tho' dawn be in the weather.  
 Oh, let me hold her in my arms.  
 Cold tho' she be, there let her languish.  
 Only her kiss of death can warm  
 The snow-fields of my anguish.*

GIOV. [aside].  
 That voice and singing!

BEN. How supple is the strength  
 That coils the rondure of a Siren's tail!  
 It lies within the fine imagination  
 Of them of old to shape their legend so  
 That monsters have position in the realm  
 Of strict anatomy and reasoned things. —  
 The frame is square.

GIOV. [looks at him for a while in silence and then  
 says:] O my beloved son!

I was a hand at draughting, I have worked  
 At stone and trowel all these many years —  
 Hard work, to give my little children bread.  
 Then, in repayment of my weariness,  
 To freshen the fatigue, that day by day  
 Added at last now makes me an old man —  
 For see, my tenor quavers and my hand  
 Can't steer the knife to purpose on this wood —  
 The master-mason said to-day my work  
 Was bad and he'd employ my age no more —  
 I laboured most for you: then promise me  
 You'll not forget and still practise sometimes  
 The flute I played at evening for repose  
 And taught you with my love in weariness.  
 I loved you, taught you, gave you all 'myself.  
 Music and singing were my joy, and you  
 Were to be my musician; but you turned  
 To another art — rightly, I say not no,  
 But yet remember music — let me hear  
 The crying of thy mellow flute once more,  
 Or sing to me as always thou hast sung  
 Since when I showed thee how upon my knee.

COSA [*to BENVENUTO*].

Love, humour him.

BEN.

I will not.

GIOV.

Benvenuto,

It is not much to give thy father back  
 A fluteful of his breath, to tender him  
 Across the early morning of thy voice

A song's worth of delicious gaiety.  
 You know not — you cannot know —  
 You know not what it is to hear aloud  
 Within the walls of age and poverty  
 Your singing child, alive, alert, and full  
 Of small perfections in the art you love.  
 We artisans are jealous, and to give  
 The secret of our art is to give all.  
 I gave you all my music — play to me  
 As only you can play — a little now,  
 For you and music are my evening-stars.

cosa. Brother!

BEN. Take off your arms.

GIOV. Then let it be.

cosa. He's crying.

BEN. Let him.

cosa. Madonna, pardon him!

GIOV. Well then, to bed. Good-night.

BEN. [to cosa]. Give me my flute,  
 Give me the cursed thing; you know the words.

cosa [aside].

He might have asked some other song of me!

*When first my eyes there, in the shadow of the meadow, saw  
 my God,*

*Like the lightning, thin and narrow, ran the arrow thro' my  
 blood.*

*Tho' I struggled, yet I could not, yet I would not look  
 away,*

*Asked his mercy to accept me or reject me, as he say.*

*I gave him nothing, tho' what could I of my duty give him  
more ?*

*Gave him little tho' I suffered all I offered at his door;  
I gave him nothing freely, fully, for 't was all I was or had,  
Gave him every thought and breath and life and death and  
wine and bread.*

*O Virgin Mary, in the awaking of the breaking Day of pain,  
If he's tired, let him rest and me be questioned for us twain.  
O let me save him, earn his blessing, me redress him in the  
sod.*

*Love can smother hell and hover with her lover up to God.*

BEN. There!

GIOV. O bless you, dear musician ! That's my son.  
What sound — you noticed, Cosa — tempered with  
Sweet doubts and sweeter hurries. As I fall  
From agèd weariness away to sleep,  
Your smooth and sad cadenzas, Benvenuto,  
Will star my dreams.

BEN. Good-night, Sir; Cosa, good-night.

[*Exeunt GIOVANNI and COSA.*]

This fluid music clouds me with a slag.  
I cannot see. My fluttering head and hand  
No more are with the metals, and the lines  
Go one into the other like threads of wool.  
Among the many arts the lowest much  
Is music: which with pitiable means  
Is scraped and blown and twanged and — no one  
knows

How or what for. O curse on't. To work.  
I can't — must — will.

GIOV. [*looks in at the door in his nightgown*].

That song, another time,  
Not quite so fast, and your beginning notes  
Less sudden and attacked with subtler breath.

[*Exit GIOVANNI.*]

BEN. If e'er I play again!

He pushes me  
So every evening to the rack. Great God,  
The very rhythm of my design is snapped  
At the root short-off, just at the noble moment  
When dream and comprehension fuse in one.  
I'll wreck my greatness here, only to please  
My father's whim. It stings patience. I — yes —  
And here over my ruined vision, I  
Writhe like a scorpion in a ring of fire.  
Florence is not for me. I will abroad  
And slake my rankling thirst for the great world,  
For liberty, myself and what I am:  
Enough! At dawn to-morrow off for Rome.

**V**

**JUVENILIA**



1



[THE following section consists exclusively of poems written before the publication of "Dramatic Verses" (October, 1902). Fortunately it has been possible accurately to date most of these poems, which illustrate, in a very brief and summary fashion, the early stages of STICKNEY's poetic growth.]



I

A R T I N M A N

I HEARD a strange philosophy, which taught  
The Art is Man, the Artist is his Art;  
That Poetry lives fleshly in the heart  
Of poets, and mechanic in their thought.  
And then, as oft before some ruined shrine  
I have seen the pious man stand awed and pale,  
So I, to see my heart's ideal trail  
In dust and grey in ashes, once divine.  
Yet came the Spring, and o'er the fleetness ran  
A breath of song, a subtle fire, a life,  
A voice: Say not the sum of things is man;  
For like the wave-rolled spiral shell is he,  
Wherein a vaster voice rings rich and rife —  
A shadowy murmur of the parent sea.

[1892]

## II

## MUSIC

THE air breaks into flutters low and sweet,  
Smooth as the liquid passage of the bird;  
And as the ocean-murmur, faintly heard  
Before the storm, its rippling echoes beat  
The ear. But then with swifter, bolder feet  
The message comes; the music stirs the heart  
To wild pulsations, until every part  
Is glowing, fervid with a throbbing heat.  
Slowly the memories of the past then rise  
In pallid glory; richer streams of sound,  
Wild with mysterious truth, all cloudlike, roll  
About the heart and flood with tears the eyes:  
But then a silence, stern, abrupt, profound:  
A vaster echo trembles in the soul!

[1892]

III

NIGHT

GREAT night! no soothing friend to pain thou art,  
Whereto a stricken soul may pour its grief.  
To thee these human sorrows be too brief  
To wake the pulse of thine eternal heart.  
Thy powers are dead; and sterner peace impart  
The silences of thy vast eloquence.  
Our reason fails; our minds succumb, too tense  
To act; ourselves grow fragile, part by part.  
So when thy pale infinitudes unfold  
Their vastness, and th' eternal harmonies,  
Threading their labyrinthine paths of gold,  
Break on the vision with a sudden sting,  
The soul is loosed, and in the boundless skies  
A dazzling light uprises on her wing.

[1892]

IV  
EVENING

## A STUDY IN METRE

Summer is sweet,  
In the air of the tepid night,  
In the drowsy breeze,  
In the blossoming trees; —  
Summer is sweet  
With its scented heat  
And the lazy hours that ease

Every heart  
From the *ui* of the day's hot light  
And ceaseless thrones,  
With their pale repose.  
Every heart  
Sips *ui* it *ui*  
Of the love that summer bestows.

Laggard and sweet,  
The evening glides on its way;  
And the glistening star  
From the eastern bar.  
Laggard and sweet,  
With golden feet,  
Climbs stilly the skies from afar.

Liquid and light,  
 A tremulous harmony sings  
 O'er the sleepy guitar  
 Its reverberate bar,  
 Liquid and light,  
 To the moon-paled night,  
 And the love of the glistening star.

Heavy perfumes  
 From the vine that grows, clambering still,  
 Wondrous and fair  
 On the trellis' tall stair,—  
 Heavy perfumes,  
 Through the moonlit glooms,  
 Drift away from her purple hair.

Night rustles late  
 Through the trees with a measured tread;  
 And the late, late word  
 Have the gold stars heard;  
 Night rustles late  
 To the eastern gate,  
 By the goad of the east-light spurred.

Swift are the hours  
 Now sped on their dusk-feathered wing  
 To the land of the west,  
 To the land of their rest;  
 Swift are the hours

O'er the dew-sprent flowers  
Away, by the grey dawn pressed!

Slower and slower  
Dies the song of the low-voiced guitar;  
Like the bend of a stream,  
The whole to a dream,  
Slower and slow,  
With a silvery flow  
Ebbs away. . . .

Away, while slow  
To the fields of the poppies of sleep  
I wander, I tread  
In the maze of their bed  
Away, while slow  
And deep and low  
In their peace I lay my head.

V

A G E A N D Y O U T H

SPARE whitened hair, a withered cheek,  
A trembling voice, a fireless eye,—  
Do these show Age's victory?

I deem it truer that the man,  
Whose frame is now more fragile grown,  
Is younger than the child new-born.

For he who enters life's long road  
Is old with duties yet to be  
And white with long expectancy;

Yet as the years roll slowly by,  
As dross that leaves the vessel bright,  
His duties fall away. The light

Of freer manhood makes him young  
And younger, till, those duties past,  
He stands in perfect youth at last.

Thus grow we younger toward the grave,  
That finds us in our fulness free,  
And on the brink of which we see

Close 'round us some such light as shone  
On Man and Nature's virgin dawn,  
Grey years ago, ere Sin was born.

[1802]

## VI

THIS is the nursling of an hundred years.  
Save this the horny cactus cannot bloom,  
That heeds not if the violets shed perfume,  
The roses blow, the August swell the ears  
Of corn, or the dull wintry silence nears.  
But ah! how shorn is all the garden-room  
Of beauty! Flowers and shrubbery dropped in gloom,  
The fountain lost in everlasting tears.  
Thou, stranger, art too late — too late for home,  
Tho' Time and Hope conspired to give thee life.  
And shalt thou live, where thro' the sultry air  
Death reigns and all malignant harms are rife?  
Or shall thy trust not rather be a snare  
To lure thy tardy beauty to its doom?

[1893]

## VII

Tho', moored along the quiet quay on some  
Errand of commerce bent, she rides at rest,  
Her title, half-obliterate at the crest,  
Speaks the soft language of a distant home.  
Her time shall be, and she invite the foam  
About her prow, the winds to blow the West  
Open, — and all her hopes move forward, blest  
And favoured 'neath the Heaven's unclouded dome  
So whilst this life of duties we discharge,  
Chained to the moorings of a mortal thought,  
The inspiring evening calls us from the marge.  
Hail, star and wind and current! Sunset, hail!  
Away, for firmly here the helm is caught,  
And the new moon hangs in the homeward sail.

[1898]

## VIII

## THE DEATH OF AISCHYLOS

(A HEADLAND NEAR SYRACUSE. WILD STORM)

THE wind walks wildly in the trees to-night.  
I feel mine age. Like this Sikelian day  
From gold faded to Erebos, so I;  
My triumphs like clouds I gather round me, and  
Sink now. The travail of the storm-scourged sea,  
The windy rack, the thunder's vivid leap  
Where the slit-lightnings ope their ghastly lips, —  
It merges all, and from ten thousand worlds,  
Sucked in the caves by slimy shores, I hear  
Only the windy sough of Acheron!  
There's storm in heaven, the wroth gods threaten war,  
And Zeus in agony hurls on the impotent world  
His foamy spleen. Our 'lated end has come,  
Tho' the Earth start up Promethean to rebel;  
She shudders, and her bowels, gouged and rent  
By the fell tempest's horns, shall lie like dust  
Distracted thro' the oblivious universe.  
The Erinys range abroad: of old they worked  
On men — thieves, liars, adulterers, parricides,  
The horde of crime; on nations — Lydian wealth  
And Persia's loud-mouthed greed; to-day, the world!  
For there are world's Erinys even as men's,

And on her bloody track they follow. Now the worlds,  
Hellas and all that is not Hellas, pay. . . .

Hellas — Athenai! By the immortal gods,  
Athenai, thou shalt die. Like some light girl  
She shook her tresses to the *Æ*gean wind,  
Where on the listless shore playing she dipped  
Her pink foot in the foam-hemmed sea and smiled.  
Wet were her asking eyes; and fresh her arms,  
Rhythmic with dull repose; her naked side  
Quivered, touched by the feathery wind, — O Zeus!  
Lustful and fickle! From the unvenged dead  
Helen is come, and fronting Salamis  
Takes up her fatal dwelling!

Thou 'dst not hear  
My sober voice. The rigid days are gone.  
Virtue, austere and pale, is gone. Thou list'st  
The wanton poet; thou lov'st the unmanly plays,  
The gilded talkers; lapp'st thy youth in vice,  
Musics lascivious, vile philosophies;  
Hugg'st in thy warm embrace the ignobly born,  
Slaves, and slaves' children come from barbarous loins;  
Fooled by a trinket, lazy, irreverent  
Of all the gods; and scorn'st with ribald lips  
The eternal prophesies. Athenai! aye,  
Heinous indeed is thine unending crime,  
And in thy fresh girl's side the serpent sword  
Churns thy red life blood into black, stark death!

Zeus, bear me hence! Forefend my scanty hair,  
 Blessed with the endless kisses of the Muse,  
 Should clot with dust of earth. Forefend my lips,  
 Withered with singing too sublime a song,  
 Should eat vileness; these eyes, now pale with age,  
 Scorched with long searching of thy Heavens and shot  
 That on the irradiate spasms of morning light  
 Round thine Olympos fixed, should from their holes,  
 Where stretched I lie, downward my livid face,  
 Stare stark into the worm-begrovelled earth!  
 Oh, bear me hence! Great Zeus, I cannot die,  
 I cannot live. Oh, rend the impassioned storm,  
 Pierce my huge breast with lightnings, strew my corpse  
 Like ashes on the world-encircling stream!  
 Shred me like fleeces, and dismembered lay  
 Upon thine altar that is all the world.      *[A pause.]*

Athenai! How thou shamed'st me! me, ye gods!  
 Who sweat and bled for liberty, threw my life  
 Before thy feet and went to Marathon,  
 By lordly Salamis' acanthine dawn  
 Ploughed up the sea and in the furrows sowed  
 Persians, a sterile crop! And if in song  
 I picked His leavings, yet the Nine vouchsafed  
 Some glory, by the gods, that yet shall wind  
 Its clarion down the building aisles of time.  
 Yet oh! the shame when to belittled singers  
 Thou gav'st thy prize! Within mine ear yet crawls  
 His voice, puny and weak, who grimed our Muse

With the pale passions of the common day;  
 Who danced by Victory's torchlight, glistening-limbed.  
 His body wet with music, the ivies black  
 Plaited in honey-hair, and his lithe skin  
 Laughing with subtle fires of blood — a shame!  
 And he rose up from the uninspirèd throng  
 To win, to snatch thy prize, Melpomene.  
 I had sung with all the voices of the world;  
 Thunders I knew; the primal gods revealed  
 Their forces, secrets; and I made them rise  
 Out of the chaos of legend, stand and speak,  
 Moving their shadow past our little life.  
 Yet him, who figments of the ignoble day  
 Made over into rhythms, him they preferred  
 And crowned, the beardless Sophokles! And I  
 Slunk homeward, soiled my brow, my better art  
 Defaced. — O Zeus! too many, many days  
 I have lived, beyond my setting striven to hold  
 The sky, outlived myself. Fulfil thy vow!  
 Remember! when I stood white-robed, black-locked,  
 Beneath thine oaks, thy wind ran on the leaves  
 And like a hurricane's song, thou swor'st : “Thy  
 death  
 Comes by my tortoise from my dog.” Then come!  
 No fitter storm shall yelling hound this earth.  
 Strike my thin breast — I bare it, supplicate  
 A rending of my being; lo! here my head!  
 Rack my dry skull and let me, let me die!

[*A long pause. He descries an eagle.*]

Ride, child of storm, ride master on thy gale.  
 Feathers unshrivelled by the lightning, skim  
 The wrathful breaker on Sikelia's shore.  
 Like a black dream, thy frown slips thro' the night!  
 Thy sprayed wings fan the windy black. He seeks  
 The march. For prey? What miserable torn life  
 Shall his clawed beak pierce? — Gone! Folded to-  
 night!

Fly on to Zeus, black bird, fly on, remote,  
 And house thee in the abode of hurricanes —

Stay, gods! great gods! Hither and hither still  
 He flies. His stinging eye flames thro' the dusk.  
 Away! His hooked mouth holds — away! How grim  
 His stiff, iron feathers near me! Lightnings, blast  
 His flight! ye gods, avert! How close he skims!  
 O, shrivelling terror of the cloudy god,  
 Be gone, black —

[*The tortoise falls on his head. He sinks to the ground.*]

Death. Alas! Alas! Alas!  
 My prayer was heard! My brow clotted with wet —  
 How comes it? Shattered by a fall of stone —  
 Or — agonies! wild pain! horrible night!  
 Mother, what wretchedness thy youth brought forth,  
 My lot of crazèd suffering, exile, death!  
 Stupours enshroud — gray morning, wilt thou ne'er  
 Shudder into the East; gray dawn, of gray,

Here is thy wonted throne Athenai, here;  
Quit thy bed, tangled in the Cyclades, —  
Gray dawn — dream — dulness — gray, gray, gray,  
    how gray.  
Alas, what sick, slow pain — my brain! my brain!

[nooq]

[He dies.]

IX

My note is highest of them all,  
And uppermost along the choir  
With tremors of my treble I call  
The mist of stars to point their fire,  
While nevermore my echoes fall  
Tho' silence hath an interval  
For love of order on the lyre.

I am the Lady of the Scale;  
For all that moveth music is . . .  
• • • • •  
The reasons of my note prevail  
Thro' pause and change of melodies;  
And singing down the endless gale  
I do command the fiery trail.

Howe'er, my song is not of me.  
The sphere and circuit of each star  
Flashes that . . . their degree,  
And storm their light with swell of war.  
The dragons of the auroral sea  
Taking their pleasure to be free  
Are yet divine and regular.

X

WHEN you 've averaged emotion, found where Nature  
goes to school,  
"After many years discovered" who God be and how  
he rule;  
Reckoned that Castalia's fountain ran a gallon to the  
hour, —  
Doubtless it and you shall dry. Another race will claim  
a dower.

Lightly you have sold your meadow and the freedom of  
the lea,  
Sunlight-ripple and sea-burst, the winy air, the spumy  
sea,  
And the wreaths of land whose edge it lifting kisses;  
and the soul  
Of the stars in violet air that wrapt gold circles round  
the pole:

Lightly sold your heart; forgotten passion, courage,  
pang and throe,  
Love the love and hate the hatred, keenly feel and  
largely do, —  
You that daub with gorgeous colours, hum the strenu-  
ous key that pearléd  
With a nightingale's and Shakespeare's song the æon-  
withered world.

Life is his that lives. By living, not by learning, may  
we learn.

And a hand that grasps not life, is gathering ashes for  
its urn.—

But a breathless race comes flooding from the portals  
of the sun.

Richer dawns and larger days and wider evenings are  
begun.

[1895]

X I  
O D E

HILLS, mountains, lakes, farewell!  
Summits and snows;  
And thou, thou sunful air of Engadin;  
Gentian and daisy and bell,  
Where the wind blows;  
Yea, all thou Nature that mine eyes have seen:  
Farewell!  
Never again  
Shall we behold your archèd skies,  
Save when estranged by pain,  
With pale and old and other eyes.

Here, to these sights,  
Enlaced about with human thought  
We came.  
A terror spelled us at the windy lights;  
Our breath grew lame  
And on this world our vision fell distraught.  
Too stinging near the sun!  
The space too utter large! the air  
Acrid so fine it was!  
Our beaten spirit, impotent to share,  
Became as glass  
Brittle and dead before the vision:

We could our face but hide,  
Our arms about us for a pall;  
"Heaven has shattered us," we cried and cried.  
Our ear dissolved; our voice quavered; and we  
were small.

Yet the rich passage of the natural days  
Dragging their carmine webs and violet hems  
Over the flowered world;  
And all about unfurled  
The languid nets of evening dripping gems  
Thro' the low rays;  
With aftertrain of stars,  
Sober divinities and simple diadems!  
Where on your cars  
You move in circle to the tracks of day!  
Ye enfolded us and we did lose  
The little habit of the hour and way.  
We have seen —  
Above the fluid air,  
The effacèd languor of ravine  
And this long valley peopled as a lair  
With smoky forms —  
The morn's gray-lidded star  
Alone;  
We've felt the storm's  
Approach, the rocks with echo jar;  
We've heard as war  
Of world on world the moving glacier moan:

Till to the brain  
The healing knowledge of eternal things,  
The sufferance of limit and the lore  
O' the world's serene adjustment quiet gave;  
Till we felt sorrow for the obedient star,  
Pity and patience for the taxèd moon  
And all this broil of universe that serves  
Its taskmaster; O, till it seemèd then  
Time was a noisy bellman, tiredly  
That rung in stellar deserts his dull bell  
Calling the planets home. A finished day!  
The orbèd meadow-land of solar gold  
Was waxen sterile and embrowned; a spell  
Had soon distilled the system to a drop,  
And of the whole destroyed  
One fiery globule wavered in the endless void.—  
So runs the dream about your height!  
So man may stand with open eye,  
A dying acolyte  
Amid your ceremonies that do not die;  
And hear,  
In sober and subduèd soul,  
Without fear  
The roll  
And tidal motion of the sacramental air.

Farewell! again farewell!  
From where ye dwell  
We shall descend within the gentle plain,—

There life is speakable:  
The while your train,  
In light of days that set not but still fare  
Upon the spirit's skies,  
More sober, more serene  
Shall rise,  
From all the things that were  
Apart,  
To that high backward of the heart  
Whereto the thought that travels ne'er hath  
wholly been.

[1895]

## XII

'T WAS yet an hour to dawn. Revengeful storm  
 Tortured the *Aegean* air. The sea was high,  
 And things of mist and water without form  
 Rose, ran, were lost. The darkness swelled with  
 cry.

Then greatly heard, 'mid all that night's alarms  
 Most hideous, was a sound of cities torn,  
 Of glory strangled in an ocean's arms,  
 Of death. The tempest sped; — and it was morn.

From high Oliaros looking forth alone,  
 The sculptor saw a sea with isles impearled, —  
 But not yon island of the golden stone:  
 Paros was sunk. A calm lay on the world.

His frightened lip grew calm. He looked around.  
 Never shone day more marvellous. — But he  
 Swore to his heart an oath that had no sound,  
 Darkly, and cast his chisel to the sea.

X III

COLOGNE CATHEDRAL

O EARTH, this is not earthly, nor of stone;  
Nor did thy bowels yield the stuff that made  
The pale gray roof whereunder light and shade  
Move undiurnal to the greater sun.  
Prayer carved the sable flowers; a choral spun  
Rose-windows in the aisle; and music stayed  
So silken-long by arch and colonnade  
That the lines trembled out and followed on.  
'T is here philosopher and peasant sings  
In pauses of the mind, when thought and faith,  
The I and Thou, are bubbles of the breath;—  
From on the citadel of human things  
Sheer to God's sky, in life rather than death,  
The serfs with quiet eyes watch with the kings.

[1895]

## XIV

WHEN by you lies my broken heart, and I,  
Up on the hill where of this world is heard  
At most the love note of a vernal bird  
And breaking leaves that flutter in the sky;  
When nothing more of all this agony  
And strange disease that in our body stirred,  
Is left, and with mine ashes are interred  
My hope and name and all that I might be;  
If then one said it differed not, to live  
Or not to live, since living all is death,  
And seeing then, beyond the yews and grove,  
The fading fragments that our years did give,  
Should say 't were better never to feel breath,  
I answer, No. For life is less than love.

[1895-96]

X V

Now the lovely moon is wilted,  
Lost her petals down the sky.  
Sorriily the wind goes by;  
Rosebuds where the branches tilted  
Yield their flowers with a sigh.

June, the wonderment of blossom,  
With her necklace' thirsty pearls,  
With her tearful eyes and girl's  
Changing, ever changing bosom,  
With the hot sun in her curls —

This is last of all the June-nights.—  
Let us softly speak of living,  
Thou whose life was but forgiving,  
I that in the passèd moonlight's  
Shadow, moved thee with my grieving.

Memory saddens our caresses.  
Feel, thy tired heart is cold,  
All the rich and devious gold  
Warm with shadow-waves, thy tresses,  
Surfeits with my kisses old.

Long ago our love was broken.  
Habit poisons the embrace.—  
Yet, O changeless in thy grace,

Speak the word thou oft hast spoken  
And the moon was on thy face.

Kisses, loved one! All is ashen  
Thro' the life that lies before;  
Drink my glowing wine that o'er  
Hearts grown cold with vanished passion  
Kindles what was wild of yore.

[1805-06]

X V I

I KNOW where all the singers hide  
And music wanders far along,—  
Down the steep rock and country side  
A mile of song;  
And sighs that the hazel sighed  
Mix and grow strong.

There tired winds come home to say  
Their tale of acres bowed in flight,  
And streamless hollows where they lay.  
There shade and light  
All the delicious day  
Linger and light.

Down sudden slips in turns and turns  
Aglitter, sings the rivulet;  
White bubbles float the little burns,  
And round are set  
Fringes of lucid ferns  
Fragile and wet.

## X V I I

HOLD still, my brain! My temples burst! Shall e'er  
 This marble burgeon with her? I can see  
 An Aphrodite, poised; a falling fold  
 About her loins, — and nothing more but sky,  
 Sky, sun, light, air, and rolling spheres, and men.  
 Where is my chisel? — Paros is an isle  
 Does make earth more magnificent than aught  
 Of conquest. I believe it's the old heart  
 Of world and universe; were the quarry-slave  
 Ambitious, he should find below, far, far  
 Below, motion, life — and a regency  
 So splendid as would shrivel him to ash.

The splinters shine like gold! Away! Away, —  
 Somewhere within here she, — Apollo, help!  
 That I may bid her rise, and mix with stone  
 My Phryne with the never-opened eye,  
 The holy oval face, the rich long neck  
 And serious body and — Oh the arms! the arms!  
 My lips grow dull with kissing of her arms,  
 Dull, yes! and sad!  
 She shall be here eternally while I  
 Make her eternal. I shall bid her come,  
 Sit near, and say things in her golden Greek,  
 And singing freshen some old mythos with  
 Warm melody. I'll call her. — No! not yet!

Not yet! Despair's enough without herself  
To make my heart at such comparison  
Break. Memory first shall guide my hand, —  
Memory made fresher by herself. Some eve  
We'll mix our water and wine; we'll chaplets weave  
Of ivy, sail for Athens, and in spring  
Hear the great plays and drink at festivals  
And run to some wild cry, some terrible  
Sharp song, away, away; the spotted skin  
Slips thro' the starlight; thrysus at her throat  
Lengthened, and head thrown wildly back to see  
More rich the winy heaven dissolve and run!  
Where is she? Phryne! Phryne! Look, my love,  
Upon me and my marble. A snow more white  
Ne'er fell; with the influence and love of years  
We'll build an outline, thou and I, or thou  
Rather, that verily my lips and breast  
Will shudder but believe. Ah come away!  
We'll go and hear the music of the sea  
And pity the old singer; watch the moon,  
Sad harmonist on the unresponsive earth;  
Feel the far stars, — yet hear and watch and feel  
Nothing but thee, thou jewel of my soul!

[1895-96]

XVIII

NIMIUM PASSUS

If I could find three words to say  
My fill of hatred, I believe  
The affrighted earth would roll away  
And leave me here alone to live.

They had some little gift to give,  
Some rank or ribbon to bestow.  
God knows, I asked not to receive, —  
They teased me, held me up for show.

But, as I think, it 's blow for blow  
Before the throne of righteous Time.  
I have them yet, tho' right be slow  
And wrath needs age to grow sublime.

Then, when the testament of earth  
Names one or other of us heir,  
I shall grow hideous with mirth,  
Curse them, and pluck them by the hair.

[1896]

XIX

SPRING is come. From the wind lightly dissipate  
feathers of mist that an upland exhales  
Whence in a glitter the soluble snows' tightened gray is  
in silver dissolved to the vales.

Juices of sun-sweetened clay, that the broken seed  
cupped, press higher; and now shall unfold  
Milk-white curls whose secret of crimson the sun shall  
divide with his arrow of gold.

Far over tremulous shrubbery glistens an ointment of  
morning and April and sky,  
Bluer's the gloom of the cypress, silverer the olives, and  
sweeter the poplar's cry.

Till from a thousand hills that surround her, marvellous  
murmurs gathering sing  
As from round foam-chapleted oceans in circles of song  
growing single: Spring.

[1897]

## XX

## IN AMPPEZZO

IN days of summer let me go  
 Up over fields, at afternoon,  
 And, lying low against my stone  
 On slopes the scythe has pain to mow,  
 Look southward a long hour alone.

For evening there is lovelier  
 Than vision or enchanted tale:  
 When wefts of yellow vapour pale,  
 And green goes down to lavender  
 On rosy cliffs, shutting the vale

Whose smoke of violet forest seeks  
 The steep and rock, where crimson crawls,  
 And drenched with carmine fire their walls  
 Go thinly smouldering to the peaks,  
 High, while the sun now somewhere falls;

Except a cloud-caught ochre spark  
 In one last summit, — and away  
 On lazy wings of mauve and gray,  
 Away and near, like memory, dark  
 Is bluish with the filmy day,

What time the swallows flying few  
 Over uncoloured fields become

Small music thro' the shining dome;  
 And sleepy leaves are feeling dew  
 Above the crickets' under-hum,

In bye-tone to a savage sound  
 Of waters that with discord smite  
 The frigid wind and lurking light,  
 And swarm behind the gloom, and bound  
 Down sleepy valleys to the night:

And thoughts delicious of the whole,  
 Gathering over all degrees,  
 Yet sad, for something more than these,  
 Across low meadow-lands of soul  
 Grow large, like north-lights no one sees.

I care not if the painter wrought  
 The tinted dream his spirit hid,  
 When rich with sight he saw, amid  
 A jarring world, one tone, and caught  
 The colour passing to his lid.

Be still, musician and thy choir!  
 Where trumpets blare and the bow stings  
 In symphony a thousand strings  
 To cry of wood-wind and desire  
 Of one impassioned voice that sings.

Nay, silence have the poet's mode  
 And southern vowels all! let die,

So ghostly-vague, the northern cry!—  
This world is better than an ode  
And evening more than elegy. —

Yet what shall singing do for me?  
How shall a verse be crimsoned o'er?  
I ever dream one art the more;  
I who did never paint would see  
The colour painters languish for,

And wisely use the instruments  
That earlier harmony affords ;  
I dream a poesy of chords  
Embroidered very rich in tints:  
'T is not enough, this work of words.

A wilder thing inflames our hearts.  
We do refuse to sift and share.  
For we would musically bear  
The burden of the gathered arts  
Together which divided were,

And, passing Knowledge, highly rear  
Upon her iron architrave  
These airy images we rave, —  
Lest wholly vain and fallen sheer  
Our vision dress us for the grave.

## XXI

If, in the night and madness of thy mind,  
The tearing storm appear to thee a thing  
Lit sharply with thy hate and suffering, —  
A cause, a God, above the screaming wind;  
Or, when the sunlight infinitely kind  
Moves the meadow and mountain land to sing,  
Thou seem to see the glister of a wing —  
Know it is nothing, and thy eyeballs blind.  
Remember all this little humour of despair  
Wrongs the rich summer-time when summer is,  
And even so thy subtle ecstasies  
The winter hurricane and awful air.  
Fall down upon thy knees and lift thy eyes,  
That all things are forever as they were.

[1899?]

## XXXI

HENCEFORWARD I no longer shall be known  
Among you all, with whom I strove to dwell.  
For all our loves were wholly pitiable:  
I was a stranger, you were not my own.  
And over all I was I ring a knell,  
As a broad blasted landscape at sundown.  
I would not have the flames break from my frown  
Against you. I will go away, -- Farewell! --  
Not as the Spaniard and his argosies  
Who ran greedily thro' the screaming sea  
Into the sunset after enterprise,  
But with dispassionate and quiet eyes  
Watching my destiny depart from me  
Like flushes in lotus after sunrise.

[1900]

XXXIII

A LETTER

YOUR own sweet flowers are here to see:  
Crisp leaves, a sudden warm perfume  
And crumbling little blossoms, from  
Italy. —

Pallanza in the bay I know,  
And Intra, and the point between.  
They scent the lilac, golden, green  
Afterglow

I' the garden lying half-asleep,  
Where curious aloes feel the star  
Thro' webs of Indian deodar  
Tremble and weep.

And so even now, tho' autumn's wet  
And leaves about me falling fast,  
With you some plants and this at last  
Flower yet!

They've come toadden here by me.  
Already every leaf is numb.  
'T was yesterday they reached me from  
Italy!

We're like your flowers, you and I.  
Tho' years since I was — alien there,  
I feel I in this northern air  
    Nearly die.

Yet would you venture that the home,  
The peace that heals, the love that cures,  
Is mine in old Val d'Arno, yours,  
    Say, in Rome ?

I ask. My novel has it so:  
I treat a travelling patriot  
In a sharp style. But — I'd forgot —  
    You don't know !

I was a singer then of scenes  
Where roses played a rôle. Enough!  
To-day I trade in prose and stuff  
    Magazines.

Sometimes I muster, to be sure,  
A rhyme, a manner, a technique;  
But all of me is, so to speak,  
    Literature. . . .

For your sweet flowers — alas how vain !  
You see they made the echoes rise !  
“Only a moment” Age replies.  
    Thanks again.

[1901]

X X I V

My life shall count by the smile and tear,  
By the flash of blue in an eye I know.  
It's a world of time since June last year  
And a timeless world I am living now.

One year ago! That we should have walked  
The very path we are walking now!  
And — tell me, do you remember? — talked  
Likewise one little year ago?

Dear love, what a trick Time plays on us! —  
As tho' the hour and day could give  
A rule for passage! or all this fuss  
Of the sun be measure how long we live!

Life is older than all the æons;  
And younger than any moment, youth.  
For aught that the earth go gathering seasons  
The fact o' the Spring is the world's best truth.

X X V

You 'll say when here again after it all  
I recollect these things, that I devise,  
Like a poor devot in confessional,  
By saying aloud to make them otherwise,

And with the thrust of that terrific guilt  
Grown soft and coward, to talk away the stain.—  
Not so — The wrong is done, the blood is spilt,  
I know it — if sense at all be in my brain.

'T is sorry homage, yes, and pitiful,  
After so long to bring before your eyes  
The frayed and dusty flowers of my soul  
With such belated show of sacrifice.

X X V I

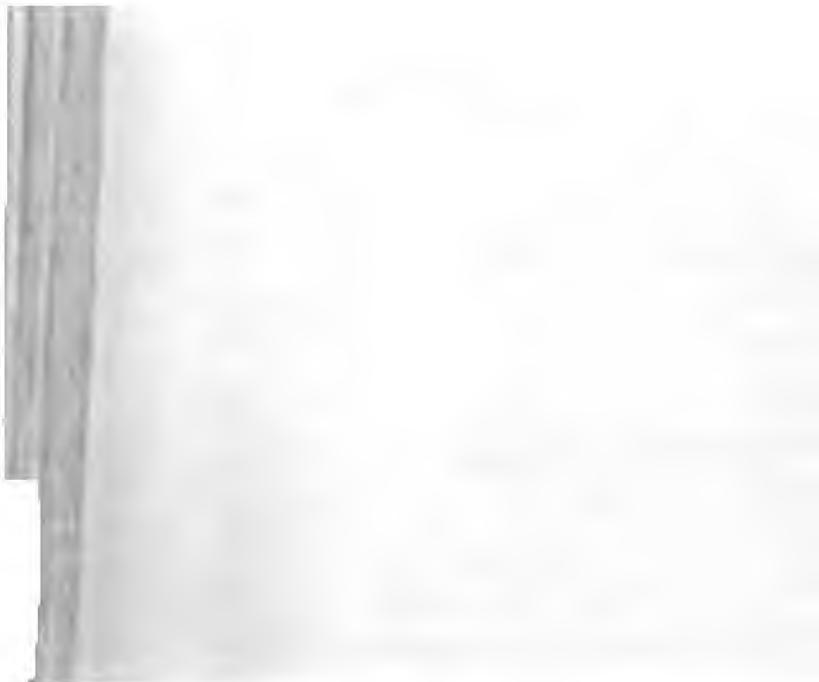
THIS is the violin. If you remember —  
One afternoon late, in the early days,  
One of those inconsolable December  
Twilights of city haze,

You came to teach me how the hardened fingers  
Must drop and nail the music down, and how  
The sound then drags and nettled cries, then lingers  
After the dying bow. —

For so all that could never be is given  
And flutters off these piteously thin  
Strings, till the night of a midsummer heaven  
Quivers . . . a violin.

I struggled, and alongside of a duty,  
A nagging everyday-long commonplace!  
I loved this hopeless exercise of beauty  
Like an allotted grace, —

The changing scales and broken chords, the trying  
From sombre notes below to catch the mark,  
I have it all thro' my heart, I tell you, crying  
Childishly in the dark.



**VI**  
**F R A G M E N T S**



[THE following pieces cannot, for the most part, be correctly dated. The important fragments of "The Cardinal Play" may, however, be safely ascribed to the year 1897, and the last five pieces in the section belong altogether to the year 1904. They are, therefore, in all probability, the last lines which STICKNEY ever wrote and have consequently been put together under the heading "Dramatic Fragments."]



I

THE Autumn 's done; they have the golden corn in,  
Clover and fern from either slope are gone,  
The peaks high up in the crystalline morning  
    Glister of gray and roan.

These pitiless two hours of midday hotter  
Than from the —— of a furnace, flare<sup>1</sup>  
The very shadows like a sunken water,  
    Leaving but sunlight there,

Till eve: and in the valley that expires  
A quick chill wind seizes the duskiness,  
While, on the summits lighting, sunset fires  
    Kindle in Sorapis.

One of these days I know, just as they sadden  
Spangling awhile the rose and yellow sky,  
You 'll go away and watch the country gladden  
    Softly to Italy.

There, take this ring of gold — and when your fancy  
Glides by to songs under the autumn moon  
Where like unfurling silks of necromancy  
    Lies out the white lagoon,

Throw it away, that it be mine no longer.  
Italian, give it back to Italy,

<sup>1</sup> [ Fourth word illegible.]

I will not have thy Past about me stronger  
Than what is yet to be.

Nay, hurry home to sleep. The ferns are rigid  
With hoar, and dark and denser hangs the mist;  
It freezes and the stars quaver in frigid  
Heaven of amethyst.

Down thro' San Vito and the land Cadore,  
To which — when closed the pestered city gate —  
The dying Titian strained, homeward from glory,  
Home from eternal fate;

Down where the outlines have a softer meaning —  
Willow and clematis, the fruit and grain;  
And the last mountain height sinks greening  
Into the golden plain, —

To Venice. There the October days purpureal  
Fall down to earth from Heaven wearily, —  
And wounded at the last, insatiate Uriel  
Dies on the flaming sea. —

One of these days you'll leave me in the mountains,  
For I go Northward, not to see this year  
Gold Italy and her wind-silvered plantains,  
But there the sad and sere —

I go elsewhere. . . .

II

SHE sat under the naked bough  
In an autumn moon's sharp shade,  
Her two hands clasped about her knee,  
And not a move she made.  
On crisp, dead leaves I walked to her  
And said, "Thou art the Morrow's Norn,"  
And "Verily" she answered me,  
Lifting her eyes forlorn.  
Then with a slow and solemn sign  
I said "Be mine."

She shook her head, but her rimey hair  
Spread not upon the wind.  
And it froze me so to see her there,  
Till my own chilled heart grew kind ;  
I touched her shoulder hard as stone,  
I pressed my hot lips to her eye,  
And wrapt my cloak about her, soft  
With a heart-warm sigh,  
Saying again with many a sign  
"Be ever mine."

She looked as when the spark goes out  
In ashes that all are dead.  
I left her, over the crisp dead leaves  
And quicklier too I sped,

For I heard as out of a fold of wind

While the white moon stood above the line

'Mid shadows moved like creeping coils

Of a poisoned ivy vine,

I heard . . .

[1885-86]

III

F R A G M E N T   O F   A N   O D E   F O R   G R E E K  
L I B E R T Y

• • • • •  
YOUR enemy like startled fowl flies forth.

Not by nice reckoning  
Of chance and odd,  
Nor martyrdom of meek repose  
Is reft from God  
The Laurel and the Rose.  
Nor matters it to bring  
Trophies home and a victor rod  
With blare of trumpets and caparison:  
It needs not to have won  
To be great.  
But the exulting soul  
Which strides alone against the sun,  
By his own passion hurled  
And slave to his desire's supreme control  
Is master of the world.

Go out! To horse! Once more  
As ye were first —  
For they have sold  
All, bartered all, better and best,  
And to their richest guest,  
When the bargain's o'er

And they the counted utmost hold,  
They let out Liberty like any whore. —

Brahma or Assur, Allah, Christ or Zeus,  
Or what strange name beside,  
Who is this God our sacrifice pursues ?  
A shadow unrevealed  
Behind the circled sun he stands,  
Muffled in everlasting pride, —  
While with uplifted hands,  
Tho' harvests, hills and strands  
Frittered with use,  
The endless earth in ecstasy has kneeled.  
Who is this God our prayer pursues ?  
Down the big night of time,  
On wings of ancient wind  
The gray smoke from a thousand altars rolls,  
And anthems cried by choired souls  
Immeasurably combined  
 Crowd in the sky sublime. —  
Who is he ? where ? and may he be divined ?  
And shall this ænigmatic Justice wake  
Upon their dreary end,  
Reckoning retribution for their pangs ?  
Shall he beat heaven till it bend,  
And in this nation's fangs  
His barbed spear of yellow lightning break ? —  
Or must their piteous wrong  
Of slaughtered men, women befouled

And nurslings trampled in the mire,  
Hurl its terrific song,  
The crying measure of a last desire? —  
And get no more than when the dying lion growled!

Aye, should he rise,  
The master shrouded in our prayer,  
Girding his sacred loins  
About the vengeance that this world denies,  
He would change our air  
To golden sulphur solid as the sun,  
And rend the planet's groins  
With his curse,  
Till down the universe  
Made vagabond,  
Shattered and fragmentary and undone,  
The frail flame-wingèd embers should rehearse  
Our cataclysm to the great stars beyond.

He shall not rise. Let hope in veils of pall  
This widely crimson morning close;  
The supreme warriors fall  
Where virtue first arose.  
Let no one weep the happy to repose

• • • • •

IV

My Ludovico, it is sad!  
You've caused your artist's soul to die.  
You've starved the very heart. And why?  
It was no common heart you had.

I don't say you were born above  
A world of worlds; to sit and scan  
In majesty Shakespearian  
The man of generations move.

I don't say you were genius. No!  
But from your tender lips would fall  
Delicious things, and I recall  
One song that set my cheeks aglow.

Why starve it? — What, pray, have you won?  
You, quick and subtle analyst,  
Would take the dearest flower and twist  
Its stem, and watch the juices run.

I know we all are such, of course.  
It took some thousand thousand years  
To make a race that liked its tears  
And whetted the edges of remorse.

But you, with such a soul to sing,  
A large and blue and quiet eye!

I love you very little — I  
Who thought you prophet, priest and king.

I wonder. Will the old world wake?  
Are we the people of the end?  
And shall the coming poets tend  
• • • • •

V

THE weakened eyes regain their sight,  
The fevered pulse grows slow and sure,  
Oh night, on thy sweet breast secure,  
My head is laid, is laid, oh night!

VI

AND I stood ringed about with marble dreams,  
Motionless, white, but fashioned of thin shift,  
Silvery and lovely. Many a man was there,  
In feature perfect, and in posture calm,  
And all touched by the wand of harmony,  
Speaking from still lips memorable things.  
The light was dusk spun by the wizard hand  
Of evening from her distaff; and the air attuned  
With notes that lute-string never bare, nor viol  
Rendered to ease its heart. And thro' the land  
Swept the slow measure of a solemn wind,

Laden with infinite murmurs, where the sea  
In voice distant and rhythmic told of powers  
Coiled in eternal slumber; far away  
Mounted and fell beneath the stooping heaven  
The hills, cadenced, subdued or sweetly plane,  
Yet most majestic, tempered with the soul  
Of age, nature, infinitude and sleep.  
And set alone in azure, like a tear  
Fallen in the veil of evening, silver pure,  
One star!

V I I

'T is said that hearts are won, at length!  
The glory is when hearts are lost.  
One loves once with a single strength,  
Or idly, cunningly almost.

V I I I

WE learn by suffering and we teach by pity.

I X

I HEAR a river thro' the valley wander  
Whose water runs, the song alone remaining.  
A rainbow stands and summer passes under.

X

NAY, take it all in all, the human sort  
As well were sleeping as awake; they use  
Their small facility of common things,  
Assume the habit of their errors, and  
Believe their eyes and ears, like animals.

X I

THE passions that we fought with and subdued  
Never quite die. In some maimed serpent's coil  
They lurk, ready to spring and vindicate  
That power was once our torture and our lord.

X I I

As one who loving beyond words will bring  
The hue and perfumes of a common rose  
And trust a meadow's language to disclose  
The true simplicity of offering;  
Then, as he mutely gives his little, spring  
Obscure slow tears that she who studies knows,  
Till in some deeper knowledge both repose  
And the old flower is now a useless thing.  
So . . .

X III .

TRANSED by the burden of this little sky,  
Straggled and breaking thro' the azure dome  
Emerged, and looked upon the world of God.

X IV

It with my life I lifted from thy head  
Ever so little a while thy crown of thorn,  
And thou not sadly in thy hair hast worn  
These daisies of my trembling spirit bred;  
If, while I huddled back thy dreadful dead,  
Thou'st happier listened to the birds at morn,  
I render sacred thanks to have been born,  
O my Madonna, dear and hallowèd.  
"T is in my soul like midnight and high tide . . .

X V

THE immortal mixes with mortality.  
The stars are drossed with sod, and yonder moon  
Which loved too long the dead Endymion,  
As any tiger-lily's petal, now  
Drops away, down the purple airs of night. —

I do remember greater worlds than these,  
An earth less arrogant, and higher hills.  
Then rattled thunders from a thousand points;  
Night, suns, morning and wind; the criss-cross wings  
Of eagles in delirious passage cast  
Small shadows on the tempest-hunted cloud.  
And there were noises from untravelled shores.  
Now nature fills with waning. One by one  
Monster and centaur die, and weakening  
The lungs of Typhon lift a feeble smoke  
From horny-mantled craters by the sea.  
Alas! and we! indeed we somehow pass  
Within a fatal evening of ourselves.  
I feel a time-like tremor in my limbs.  
I know my beauty, and I understand  
Pleasure, to-morrow, yesterday, and love. —  
O had I one like him to gladden me.  
Yet would I be alone, for in my breasts  
I do believe the milk is not again.

## XVI

FRAGMENT OF A DRAMA CALLED  
"THE CARDINAL PLAY"

ANGELO. You're paler than your wont, my Lord. I  
pray

Your sorrows for the church —

CARDINAL. I've other thoughts  
To-day, my son. You'll listen. Are we heard?

ANG. Alone.

CARD. The jeweller Veri had in's care —  
Pray listen, for I'm tired — a pretty girl,  
Clean of our dirty age and marvellous  
In beauty, body, soul and maidenhood.  
To-day's a week, he quit his workshop, came  
To bring me an ordered figure silver-carved  
I'd need of. 'T was some hour, I'd say two hours  
After the sunset. And, waiting to hear  
My approval of the long-belaboured work,  
He stayed awhile. But wandering home he found  
A window burst, and apprehending some  
Great loss of metals and I know not what,  
He rushed within — all safe — except — except  
Calling Lucia — that's the girl's name — she  
Made not a sound of answer. Breaking in  
He finds her — gone — robbed — O my son — I say  
She'd flown — and lay the bitter question — where?

ANG. I fear, my Lord —

CARD. I've more to say. He came,  
 Two long days passed, to acquaint me. Me he sought  
 For being professed protector of his work  
 And knowing the noblemen who play such tricks  
 Upon the — on peasant women — or I'd say  
 On those below them. You, my son, are young  
 And pass your youth among them. Here's my word:  
 You'll find what villain — casually you'll search  
 And ask, as speaking of indifferent things —  
 You'll find me out this man, avenge me —

ANG. Venge you, my Lord ?

CARD. Me, yes, as shielding Veri.

ANG. My wits are dull, your pardon. Truth to say,  
 I had not thought to pay a jeweller's bills,  
 And hold all Roman maidenheads in trust.  
 Upon my word.

CARD. My son, it suits you ill  
 To refuse me.

ANG. Your Grace be kind! Howe'er  
 You'll grant it's odd for Roman gentlemen  
 To fight a tradesman's duels.

CARD. I've said my wish.  
 Be pleased, consider all your life is mine,  
 Your state and rank, your fortune —

ANG. Sir, enough!  
 The story's this: one happy day you found  
 A woman — noble, fair, we'll say, who liked —  
 I speak with reverence — you and all you were.  
 So things begin. The season comes, the day, —

Your youth is happy and she divinely dower'd  
With all one loves one great rich single time.  
I'm brief: the lady was my mother, you  
My father, and God's obscured will was done.  
We grow, we beings of your happiness,  
Goaded to life, and clothed and dressed and wrapped  
In the disease of long mortality.  
We breathe and grow: the cruel frequency  
Of year and hour is on us, and we learn  
Our birth was precious — but, well, casual.  
Yet we live on, and on necessity's  
Stern heart lay our ununderstanding heads.  
And we live on. Then comes a day, you've thought  
At such time such a thing should so be done, —  
If not, you hound us out. Now, hear me God,  
It's passing strange. A slave is fairly bought  
And cudgelled if the bargain's bad, — so far  
So good. But I, not bought, but wholly made  
Out of your pleasure, fact and monument  
Of your caprice, a thing you hazarded  
On the big gaming table of the world,  
And now, — why after all, say you, it's mine,  
And let it work to please me. — My respect,  
Your Eminence, dies poisoned by the truth.  
For this, despoil me as you will, my sword  
Is mine, my honour's mine, and mine my life.  
I'll fight no jeweller's fight, that's flat, nor earn  
A busy quarrel-monger's name. I've said.  
CARD. You press me hard, for one who long was kind,

And made your livelihood as best  
Fortune and fame would warrant — yet of that  
Enough.

[*Coldly.*] I came to order and I sue:  
Your sword is my defence. Hear me again,  
My son, for I had interest in —

ANG. Interest?

CARD. I say, the girl —

ANG. You loved the girl?

CARD. She was my —

ANG. What?

CARD. My — ward.

ANG. Ward, loved your ward!

Christ and the Saints, how hideous!

[*He laughs fiercely and long and sinks into a chair.*]

I had thought

A scarlet Cardinal with silver hair  
Had made his peace with lust —

CARD. Villain, be still  
Or I'll tear out thy tongue. She was — Ah God —  
She was my daughter.

[*A long pause. ANGELO passes his hand over his forehead and seems stupefied and shakes his head.*]

ANG. Wait — no — I cannot — what you said —  
You spoke —

CARD. Well, sir, —

ANG. [*frantic*]. No, no, I'll not believe 't.

No, God Almighty's curse, no, no. I swear it's false.  
I say, no. It's to spur me finely on,  
To move my stubborn temper. But the lie's  
Too thick, too simple.

CARD. [calling]. Luigi!

ANG. Why, it's plain  
The thing could never be, — the beasts abhor —  
Oh, loathsome ghost, away!

[LUCIA and FRASCATI enter. ANGELO still mutters  
away.]

CARD. [trembling with suppressed anger].

The tender fool  
Will not believe she is my daughter —

[FRASCATI shudders.]

LUCIA. Good sir, be calm; as I am old and sad  
She is your sister.

ANG. [cries wildly]. Ah! Ah! Aches of the damned,  
Flames of the ugly place, tremendous pain  
And everlasting anguish, take my soul.  
Old man, thou art a fool — *she* is my heart,  
My life. I robbed her, kissed her, loved her, I —  
And planned eternal peace upon her breast,  
And wove her garments of mine ecstasies  
And made her girdle of mine arms. I say  
We drank one only cup, and eat together, —  
We made a world — and — and — Ah, both you lie,  
And came to cheat my single happiness,

[LUCIA comes in.]

My only years in all this dreary light —

Where youth was not youth, life not life — till now  
When like a broken bird within her hand  
I lay, she giving me back melody,  
And turning nightingale she too with me  
Rose thro' the violet night singing, singing,  
Over the moon-beloved and perfumed fields.

[*He turns to LUIGI, with a broken voice.*]

You are too old to stab me with a lie —  
[*With terrible anxiety.*] Tell me, kind old Luigi — tell  
me, now;

You see, I'm wretched as a worm half crushed —  
Be true — For God's sake, speak the truth . . .

[*LUIGI turns away in tears.*]

Well then, it *is* !

Angel of Destiny, I felt thy feathers pass  
Upon my brow and heard thy clapping wing  
Longer ago than memory or life.

¶ Take me away.

[*He stabs himself.*]

Lucia, where art thou? [*He dies.*]

SHORTER FRAGMENTS FROM "THE  
CARDINAL PLAY"

I

ANGELO

I WOULD I had thee like a drop of dew  
That falls from heaven without history.

II

FRASCATI

Oh, mine Angelo,  
These things creep out by every finger tip;  
A footprint tells the tale. And women's love  
Is noisy with perpetual echo; for they cry  
In upper chambers whence the filtering sound  
Grows tell-tale to the world; and next they write  
Love-letters that go most directly wrong.

III

ANGELO

We spend a playful youth to find at last  
A woman saviour of ourselves. I've found.  
And in my iron arms the surge can beat  
Importunate and long. I shall not yield.  
I loved her as in play: I love her now  
With the great steady need of all a soul.

I V

L U C I A

*[Singing at her window]*

Ask me my all with a look of thine eyes.  
A blush replies,  
Yes.  
Heart and whatever soever be mine,  
Not less  
Is thine.  
Thou art sunflooded and infinite sky  
And I  
A little star lost far away  
Down the day.

*[Singing as she descends]*

Thou art the branches unwindily stirred,  
I, a bird  
Who tire from seas of the west  
To thy breast.

V

L U C I A

A parting, now!  
To part! why, yes. But what's in parting? what  
In such small separation as we plan  
To fit our chances? what's in leaving? Time.

And Time is long, and longer Time is Pain,  
And Pain is death. O let us wholly die  
Who lived too wildly —

ANGLO.

So said I, Lucia,  
Were 't not that one may roundly crawl about  
The moving camps of Destiny, and build  
Behind her passage fortresses of peace  
To harbour life in.

X V I I

“DRAMATIC FRAGMENTS”

[1904]

I

I USED to think  
The mind essential in the body, even  
As stood the body essential in the mind:  
Two inseparable things, by nature equal  
And similar, and in creation's song  
Halving the total scale: it is not so.  
Unlike and cross like driftwood sticks they come  
Churned in the giddy trough: a chunk of pine,  
A slab of rosewood: mangled each on each  
With knocks and friction, or in deadly pain  
Sheathing each other's splinters: till at last  
Without all stuff or shape they're jetted up  
Where in the bluish moisture rot whate'er  
Was vomited in horror from the sea.

II

BLINDNESS AND DEAFNESS

*[Enter X, who learns the dispute and says]*

You waste good time.

More philosophic much it were to ask  
By speculation or experiment  
What midget skims the void of that man  
Who being all these together: deaf, dumb, blind,  
Yet must within himself, as, sepulchred  
Mid rings of brassen crenellation down  
Under tremendous towers, the heart of Cain,  
Be alive.

III

THE SOUL OF TIME

TIME's a circumference

Whereof the segment of our station seems  
A long straight line from nothing into naught.  
Therefore we say "progress," "infinity" —  
Dull words whose object  
Hangs in the air of error and delights  
Our boyish minds ahunt for butterflies.  
For aspiration studies not the sky  
But looks for stars; the victories of faith

Are soldiered none the less with certainties,  
And all the multitudinous armies decked  
With banners blown ahead and flute before  
March not to the desert or th' Elysian fields,  
But in the track of some discovery,  
The grip and cognizance of something true,  
Which won resolves a better distribution  
Between the dreaming mind and real truth.

I cannot understand you.

'T is because  
You lean over my meaning's edge and feel  
A dizziness of the things I have not said.

I V

Be patient, very patient; for the skies  
Within my human soul now sunset-flushed  
Break desperate magic on the world I knew,  
And in the crimson evening flying down  
Bell-sounds and birds of ancient ecstasy  
Most wonderfully carol one time more.

Sir, say no more.  
Within me 't is as if  
The green and climbing eyesight of a cat  
Crawled near my mind's poor birds.





**The Riverside Press**  
*Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.*  
*Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.*





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